This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3433 07489275 7

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WOMEN:

OR,

POUR ET CONTRE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WOMEN;

OR,

POUR ET CONTRE.

A TALE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "BERTRAM," &c.

"'Tis good to be merry and wise,
'Tis good to be honest and true;
'Tis good to be off with the old love
Before you be on with the new."

Scotch Ballad.

Rev. Charles Robert Maturin

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LIBRARY

EDINBURGH:

Printed by James Ballantyne and Co.

FOR ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO. EDINBURGH; AND LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN, LONDON.

1818.

Digitized by Google

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

WOMEN;

OR,

POUR ET CONTRE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

WOMEN;

OR,

POUR ET CONTRE.

CHAPTER I.

O primavera gioventu dell' anno
Bella madre di fiori
D'erbe novelle, e *di novelli amori.*

THE lovers were on their way to France, after which they purposed visiting Italy. What brilliant prospects before them!—Youth, passion, genius, affluence,—every felicity of life seemed mingled in the cup that was held to their lips, and no two intoxicated revellers at life's short banquet ever sat down more determined to quaff the poison, and believe it nectar.

Digitized by Google

All was soon arranged between them; Zaira, whose principles were unshaken and uncorrupted, amid the indulgence o her strongest feelings, opposed an invincible barrier to the impetuosity of De Courcy. Not all his importunities could prevail on her to consent to an immediate marriage. She had fears (taught by her former sufferings) amid all her hopes and her present felicity. She wished to develope his character, to mature his intellects, to fix his feelings, before she could intrust her happiness to them. She succeeded in convincing him, or at least persuading him, it would be best to pass a year on the continent as strangers and travellers, to enlarge their minds with observations on existing life, and enrich their imaginations with the recollection of antiquity; and at the end of that period, if —— "*If*," repeated De Courcy, pressing her hand to his lips; and she was silent from conviction and delight.

The state of the continent was favour-

Digitized by Google

able for the first time for more than twenty years to their plans and their hopes. Peace, peace every where. No prisons, no passports, no fears; the family of mankind wandered about the world at large. Kingdoms appeared like different apartments in the same mansion, and the allied sovereigns went visiting about like country gentlemen calling at each other's seats.

Zaira's affairs required they should first visit England; they did, and as soon as they could, went to France; and, during their whole progress, the plan which Zaira had internally laid down was resolutely pursued. Curiosity itself must have perished for want of food in watching them. They travelled like brother and sister, only with rather less proximity than is allowed to relations so near. They never sat in the same carriage; they never rested in the same house; they never met but at meals like other travellers. It must be owned, that had Zaira been studying for artificial

Digitized by Google

influence over the desultory, fluctuating mind of De Courcy, she could not have unintentionally adopted a better expedient. The restraint produced perpetual novelty, and perpetual novelty was necessary for him.

It was during her short stay in England that Zaira wrote to Madame St Maur on the subject of her present hopes and feelings. Part of her letter was employed in deprecating Madame St Maur's astonishment at her having selected an Irishman for the partner of her life, after seeing the continent at her feet, and seeing it without emotion. In another part she says,—"I know I shall appear eccentric to the world in the formation of my plan of happiness; but perhaps every human being, however limited in intellect, makes their happiness dependent on their imagination. I cannot understand why the intellectual intercourse between men and women should be limited as it always is, annihilated as it often is,

Digitized by Google

by the prejudices of society, arising from subjects that have nothing in common with intellectual cultivation.

"The connection between men and women is always supposed to include marriage or crime. Has mental union no tie, no bond independent of either? Is it not possible to devote one's self to intellectual enjoyment exclusively, and to enjoy it in the presence of the object that partakes of it, in his *continued presence*, without an appeal to the laws to secure it, whose interference would probably banish it for ever.

"I covet neither to be the wife or the mistress of the man I love; I seek to enjoy that intellectual existence, of which I can better comprehend the felicity than of the agitations of passion. I would wish to travers the world with him, to see all that life could shew, and recollection supply; to pass from the splendours of Paris to the ruins of Rome; to smile on him in festivity, and to muse with him in solitude; to

Digitized by Google

talk of the wonders of the days of old, amid the architectural desert of Tadmor or Persepolis; or enjoy the felicities of modern refinement amid the scavans of enlightened Europe; to blend all the charms of the arts with all the resources of literature; to touch my harp for him where Horace tuned his lyre, and read with him the poetry of Virgil, while reclining on his tomb; to blend in one delicious draught all that nature, genius, antiquity, and society can offer, and drink with him the *amreeta cup of immortality*, that unites human existence to the divine by the only power they have in common, the power of mind. Why should such an union as this be fettered by the prejudices of society? The ties of interest, of caprice, of physical passion, which society is hourly forming and sanctioning, are criminal, compared to this.

"*Society demands too much for what it gives:* It may have a right to controul our manners, but when it presumes to interfere

Digitized by Google

with our happiness, we disdain the "little brief authority" which would tyrannize over what must ever be exempt from its jurisdiction."

Zaira pursues this subject for a considerable time, and at length ends with these words:—"I feel, Delphine, you do not understand me."

Madame St Maur's answer came soon. She was greatly shocked when she heard the step Zaira had taken.

"Not understand you, my charming Zaira! I ask ten thousand pardons, but you really remind me of Madame du Terrasson, the most frivolous woman in all Paris, (and that is saying a great deal) who is perpetually telling her friends they cannot penetrate a character so profound as her's. I really never found the least difficulty in understanding a person who understood themselves. I see exactly your situation; and the more eloquence and sentiment you waste in hiding it from yourself, the more

Digitized by Google

you betray it to me. It is a bad omen your attacking the present state of society. No woman ever inveighed against society, but with the hopes of making it worse. The world is a very good world, (if there were not so many taxes), and when I leave it, I never expect to see a better; but that may be my humility.

"The truth is, you are in love with a beautiful youth, whom nature has made an Adonis, and whom you would fain make an Apollo. Now this is a very common occurrence, and you are angry because it is so. You wish to make it something uncommon; and to do so, you only require to unhinge the entire frame of society, and to wander over the world in a fit of platonism run mad. We are amazingly fond of imagining ourselves in situations in which human beings never before were placed, and to conceive that these situations must suggest and justify new and unprecedented measures in our own conduct, when, in

Digitized by Google

fact, we are just in the same circumstances that our mothers and grandmothers, and so on up to Eve, were in before us."

[Here Madame St Maur makes a digression about a Kashmeer shawl, that her lover, M. de Viosmenil, had just presented her with; and declares she is so intoxicated by this homage, and the perfume of the superb shawl, that she is unable for some time to proceed. At length she goes on.]

"If I understand your future plan, it is in fact to educate a husband for yourself. Now, granting what is beyond all latitude even of hypothesis, that an Irishman was the properest person to select for this singular experiment; that this melange of love and literature should happen to hit his fancy as well as your's; that he should wander all over the continent with you *in all the constancy of nineteen*, without ever wishing to sacrifice at the shrine of another French grace, or Italian muse; and that you wandered with him, without the least

Digitized by Google

compromise of your character, nominal or real, (and I hardly know which is worse)—granting all this, and that you played this desperate game with the utmost dexterity and success, what would you gain by it? Misery for life—absolute misery. Your success must leave on his mind a decided impression of your intellectual superiority, the very last impression a woman should leave on the mind of a man whom she wished to love her. Of all superiority, it is that of which men are most jealous, because it is the only one of which they are in any danger. Physical force they have all to themselves, (ever since the times of the Amazons at least); and the advantages of nature are of so precarious and inferior a character, as not to form a subject of competition.

"None but a fop, a Dandi, would envy his wife's beauty; and none but a fool would undervalue her wealth or consequence, because he can make his own advantage of

Digitized by Google

them. But of what use are a woman's genius and talents, except to impress her husband every moment of his humiliated existence, with a sense of his own inferiority? Never tell me of Le Fevre and Madame Dacier, a pair of pedants. I am sure they were squabbling eternally, and threw Homer and Horace at each other's heads, literally or metaphorically, every moment of their lives.

"Voltaire and Madame du Chatelet did much better. They contented themselves with mangling poor Newton between them, and satisfied with this amusement, never thought of marrying at all. Besides, these people had only learning; you are a genius, Zaira; and genius, (which I venerate from my soul, and think superior to every thing under heaven, except common sense) makes a woman a charming mistress, but the devil of a wife.

"I know, my charming Zaira, that you unite with genius a mixture of enthusiasm

Digitized by Google

and mildness, that woman, till you, never possessed; woman (admired as you) certainly never exhibited before. But it does not signify; man will and must be superior. They may twine the chains in which they bind us with the brilliant flowers of chivalric courtesy, or impassioned devotion; but still they are chains. Our best attitude in wearing them is that of a graceful but conscious submission, and we never conquer effectually, but in appearing to be slaves. Take my advice, beautiful Zaira! dazzle on the theatre; charm in crowds; come to Paris; be the first

——— 'to lead the regal ball,
Adored by thousands, and admired by all;'

but give up all idea of being *la bonne mere du famille*; it will never do.—What colour are De Courcy's eyes?"

In a long postscript, Madame St Maur

Digitized by Google

tells Zaira of the incomparable dancing of the Emperor of Russia at the Parisian balls, and her regrets that he was so soon to go to London—*her* regrets. However, she believed she had excited some sensation, and had had some success during his stay in Paris.

Zaira could well discriminate the plain good sense, the worldly knowledge of *les convenances du societé*, and the Parisian levity, that entered into the composition of this letter. She was amused by the levity, revolted by the worldliness, and not convinced by the good sense.

De Courcy and Zaira were now on their way to Paris.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

"Il n'est guère plaisant d'être empoisonnée même par l'esprit de rose.

THE day after she wrote her letter, Madame St Maur was obliged to quit Paris to attend the event of a suit pending against her in Languedoc, where the greater part of her property lay. Her affection, her strong affection, struggled and survived amid the claims of her own interest; and before she quitted Paris, she implored M. de Viosmenil, her lover, a man of sense, and knowledge of the world, (which are common), and of feeling, (which is uncommon, at least in alliance with the other qua-

Digitized by Google

lities), to be *present* with Zaira, and watch her with all the vigilance of friendship.

M. de Viosmenil undertook the task just as Zaira and De Courcy arrived in Paris.

It was an interesting, almost an awful period when they arrived. Paris, in May 1814, was, what no one now need be told, the metropolis of all Europe; all mankind were hurrying there, and astonished to find themselves there. The plunder of all Europe; the wonders of antiquity; the *chef-d'œuvres* of modern imitation; all that Herculaneum could be disembowelled of; all that could be gleaned from Thebais or Alexandria; all that could be swept away from modern palaces, from Milan to Moscow, from Berlin to Vienna; all the riches of that dreadful harvest, that had been reaped in blood from one end of the earth to the other, were accumulated there. The spoiler was gone, but the spoil was yet there; and there were living wonders enough to satiate the eye, and fill the soul, had the streets been

Digitized by Google

grass-grown, and the buildings hovels. There were emperors, and kings, and heroes—names that one wonders at in gazettes, were spoken of as familiarly by the populace of Paris, "as maids of thirteen do of puppy-dogs."—All the embodied genius, energy, patriotism, and military skill, which had conducted those tremendous operations, which had been approximating each other since the battle of Leipsic, and had now united them in a common centre of combined and interminable hostility—one could not walk the streets without jostling against a sovereign, a general, a hero—Paris seemed like the city of the gods.

Charles believed himself breathing empyreal air; he felt the military mania (though its force was now spent) in all its first intoxicating inspiration. What would he have given to have been crossing the Pyrenees with Wellington, or the Rhine with the allies! How contemptible his past existence appeared to him, whether

Digitized by Google

passed in the conventicle with Eva, or in the boudoir with Zaira!—Equally contemptible. Europe had been won and lost, and he had not struck a blow for her safety, or her ruin!—Yes, even the latter alternative appeared at the moment less shameful. He forgave (in his own behalf) Solon for making the law which declared it criminal to be neutral in civil war.

All this passed rapidly through his mind as he stood on the inspiring heights of Montmartre; he descended, entered Paris, passed the two following days in traversing it, and forgot every thing, but that it was the centre of every luxury which the imagination or the senses, in their most ambitious and unbounded revelry, could demand or enjoy.

It was a mad step of Zaira to bring him to Paris first. She should have taken him to the banks of the Tiber rather than the banks of the Seine. Amid the awful solitudes of antiquity, his mind might have

Digitized by Google

acquired that decided taste for literature and reflection which she wished to inspire. Paris could give literature enough to be sure; but was Paris the place to inspire reflection? It was a desperate step. Paris had too many charms for De Courcy, and De Courcy had charms too for Paris. There is a high value set on mere physical qualities by a nation almost proverbially destitute of them. The Apollo Belvidere seemed to have arrived at Paris only to harbinger De Courcy. His beauty; his towering stature; the softness of his manners; the result of his timidity taken for the quality itself; and his enthusiasm, so like genius, as to have deceived even Zaira, were a brilliant security for his success in Parisian society, introduced as he was. Eager as he set out for all and every species of information and improvement, "jealous" of literary "honour," he soon began to find that Paris could afford

Digitized by Google

more than intellectual pleasures, and that there were more things in it than Zaira's philosophy dreamt of.

It was just at this period that M. de Viosmenil, at Madame St Maur's entreaty, entered on his invidious, suspicious, painful office of Providor of Zaira's happiness. His first bulletin, issued in consequence of his new office, runs in these words—alarming words.

M. De Viosmenil's *Letter*.

"Well—my beloved Delphine, I have seen your friends; your friend rather I should say, for you have not yet seen M. de Courcy. I have seen him, and have half-forgiven Zaira. I have studied him, and trembled for her. He is the most perfect human form I ever beheld; nothing like him has ever trod the earth; and the gentleness of his manners makes a contrast

Digitized by Google

almost ludicrous with his gigantic stature and commanding presence. His manners are singular, a mixture of diffidence and enthusiasm altogether incredible, totally un-Parisian—destitute of *our inimitable ease*, and borrowing their chiefest charm from that destitution. This stranger enslaves us, by fighting with weapons unknown to us before. He blushes like a girl, frolics like a boy, talks like a man, and looks like a hero. He is a man, in the language of that inimitable poet you taught me to read—

"Who could win woman's heart, ruin and leave her."

"Believe me it is this class of men, so seductive from their softness, who are the destruction of women; that very gentleness and flexibility that lends its dangerous charm to their manners, extends its influence to their character, and the idol of

Digitized by Google

yesterday is trod into dust, while they rush to offer their worship to the deity of tomorrow over the fragments.

"I think Zaira is lost—lost—Her character is not yet compromised, but her peace must be gone. I do not rest my conclusion on abstract reasoning, nothing could be more absurd; for the wanderings of the human mind, when indulged, defy and defeat all reasoning founded on their operations.

"I speak of facts only—facts that I have witnessed. Yesterday I met them at a party at our friend ——'s. The circle was brilliant, and Zaira was unusually eloquent in literature. At the end of a striking sentence which had called forth loud applauses from her auditors, she looked round with a flush of triumph in her lovely countenance for De Courcy. She saw him engaged, not in conversation, but in delighted listening attention to the beautiful Eulalie de Touranges He was bend-

Digitized by Google

ing over her chair in silence. I marked the change in her countenance, in her voice; the subsiding of her whole figure; the gloomy vacancy of disappointment in her expression. Her hearers did not notice it; they pressed her with some new remarks. She attempted to answer, but evidently did not understand them; struggled to recover her composure, and went on, obviously not knowing of what she was speaking. Music was proposed soon after; and apparently determined to force De Courcy to feel an interest in what she was undertaking, she asked him what she should sing. He appeared not pleased at the publicity which this application gave him, and returned some slight answer, referring her to her own choice. She sat down. I could hear her sigh. She turned languidly over the leaves of her music-book, and sung an air *sotto voce* with a tone, a look, a manner unlike,—oh, how unlike Zaira! At the

Digitized by Google

close of the air, she turned her head almost imperceptibly, and saw De Courcy arranging the men on a chess-board with Mademoiselle de Touranges. The last notes of the air were nearly unintelligible. If Zaira goes on this way, she is ruined. She is too dazzling, too exigeante, too anxious to make every moment pass in a paroxysm of delight. Pleasure itself so protracted, so exaggerated, must become pain. It is like the punishment said to be inflicted on Regulus, cutting off the eyelids to turn the light of the sun into torture. Men sooner forgive women for pleasing even too little than too much; for we pay ourselves the compliment of believing, that the failure of the former arises from our not having taken the trouble of drawing them out, that they might be charming if we pleased to make them so; but women, who show their powers of pleasing to be independent of us, cannot wonder if we leave them to the enjoyment they can procure for themselves. If Zaira

Digitized by Google

had common sense (a faculty amazingly scarce,) she would feel her own advantage in suffering him to converse with other women as much as possible; for what woman would not suffer by a comparison with her, if Zaira gives him time to make it? I pity her. When a woman once suffers the display of her talents to depend on her feelings, and suffers the look, the whisper, the conscious presence of an individual, to influence her more than the homage of crowds, she becomes wretched; for, alas! it is much easier to obtain the bravos of a crowd, than the applause of an individual.

"I shall observe them, however, more closely, with all the vigilance that my devotion to you inspires.

"De Viosmenil."

The next day M. de Viosmenil called on Zaira; he found matters a little worse. She was waiting with repressed but visible wretchedness of impatience for De Courcy. He had promised to attend her to a lecture

Digitized by Google

of the Abbé Sicard's, and he had gone to visit what was once the Bois de Boulogne, and hear the exclamation of his Parisian Ciceroni against "les coquins Prussiens, et les vilains Cosacks."* Company arrived; Zaira forced herself to converse; it was but force. She accompanied them to the lecture, was absent and uninterested. The rest viewed her with wonder; De Viosmenil, who knew the secret, with deep and painful interest, and he talked, more than any Frenchman ever talked, for two hours, to withdraw the attention of the party from her.

Zaira was at a splendid ball that evening; she had been introduced in the course of it to some distinguished personages; she had been requested to sing by a sovereign; her ambition seemed a little to revive, and a smile once more was diffused over her beautiful features; but De Viosmenil, who

* Anachronism. *Transeat cum cæteris.*

Digitized by Google

marked her frequent abstraction, her glances for ever reverting to the door, the stifled sigh of disappointment, and the forced gaiety of her renewed conversation, felt and understood what was the hope that caused this partial excitement, and how little that hope was likely to be verified.

At length she could struggle no longer; she retired gradually from the circle that had gathered round her; and in the most brilliant society in Paris, Zaira was sitting in a remote corner almost alone, and utterly neglected, except by M. de Viosmenil, when (among a group that entered the room) she recognized De Courcy—started from her seat—uttered almost a scream of joy; then restraining herself, sat down, but turned such a look of eager, confidential pleasure on De Viosmenil, that he could not help grasping her hand as a token of intuitive recognition of her feelings.

De Courcy approached; he seemed anxious to make his way to Zaira; it was easily made; he advanced and uttered

Digitized by Google

some inarticulate expressions of apology.—The tone was enough for Zaira; her countenance was radiant with smiles as he approached; but when he appeared anxious to sooth her feelings for his involuntary neglect, tears, which she could not repress, started into her eyes.

De Courcy, shocked and distressed, and (dare we say it) incensed, retired. He could not bear (what man with insular feelings could bear) being made so conspicuous as the cause of Zaira's tears.

De Viosmenil, in spite of all his knowledge of life, and all his Parisian experience of the characters of women, turned away in astonishment.—"Good God! is this possible?"—so deep, so desperate an infatuation appeared to him without precedent.

Whether the company took a favourable omen from the renewed radiance of Zaira's countenance on De Courcy's entrance, or from some other cause, they surrounded her with importunities for a song; first-

Digitized by Google

rate accompaniment was ready, was impatient; far, far different from the puny aid of the musicians she had been accompanied by often in De Courcy's hearing in Dublin. Supported by his presence, her performance was equal to all her former excellence and fame.

The dancing was then about to be renewed, when *the illustrious personage* before mentioned expressed a wish for another air.

De Courcy was just then solicited to join in a quadrille. Zaira, however, took an opportunity of saying to him, with brief eagerness, "I am pressed to sing again by ——; Do you wish I should?" and she remembered the time when the bare mention of such a hope would have illuminated his whole evening. How soon a woman loses her power when she loses her heart! De Courcy, who was really anxious to dance, replied coldly, "Yes, surely, if you wish it." If *she wished it!* Alas, when it comes

Digitized by Google

to this reference to wishes, it is a sign that we have lost that intuitive sense of each other's feelings which is understood without questions, and expressed without conditions. When we really love, we decide for each other without hesitation, for we feel that we have but one heart. Zaira hurried through her song, and in a few moments De Courcy was engaged in a quadrille with Eulalie de Touranges.

The next day, De Courcy, who felt really anxious for intellectual eminence, met some literary men at Zaira's, and the morning would have been delightful, but for a constant kind of tacit reference to him as Zaira's favourite,—a kind of watching for his opinions and sentiments as an implied homage to Zaira's, that abashed and embarrassed De Courcy. He did not wish their identity of sentiment to be thus publicly recognised. What man wishes to have his whole intellectual stock supposed to be the borrowed property of a female mind?—

Digitized by Google

There was a dinner-party at De Viosmenil's, and Eulalie de Touranges was there, more beautiful than ever. She was eminently handsome, though not in the usual style of French beauty, and there was a softness and diffidence in her manner, which, though only the veil to consummate coldness of heart, and levity of character, struck De Courcy as a grateful contrast to the glare, the ambition, the admitted pre-eminence of Zaira. At all events, no man is long without a reason to justify his gratitude to a woman who distinguishes him by her preference.

The company, after dinner, amused themselves in composing epitaphs for Buonaparte in his retreat at Elba. They then passed on to epitaphs in general, and De Courcy was astonished at the latitude allowed in Parisian conversation, when he heard the punning Latin epitaph translated into bad, indecent French, and the *occasion related.*

Habe mortem præ oculis,
L'Abbe mort en prez au cul lis.

Digitized by Google

The beautiful Eulalie looked down. De Viosmenil, whose quick eye caught and comprehended the cause of De Courcy's embarrassment, turned the conversation to a subject which he thought must obliterate the traces of the last. He had been in England, and he spoke of English epitaphs; and he repeated, in good English, that beautiful one on the *only* daughter of Sir Brooke Boothby,—"The unhappy parents ventured their whole freight of happiness in this frail bark, and the wreck was total."

The hearers applauded, and Zaira, raising her eyes, filled with tears, fixed them on De Courcy with a peculiar expression.

De Courcy did not observe her; he had lost that *sixth sense of love*, by which we feel that the eyes of those who love us are fixed on us, as distinctly as we hear their voices when addressed to us. De Viosmenil saw it, and felt for her at the bottom of his heart; he saw the bark was frail, and he dreaded the wreck would be total.

Digitized by Google

At the other end of the table, a M. De Cardonneau, one of those atheistical philosophising sciolists, (the pest of Parisian society,) had been quoting, with an air of sentimental profundity, the well-known sentence of a French writer,—"It is impossible to determine which are most to blame, those who cease to please, or those who cease to be pleased." Eulalie, in the softest tones of her soft voice, declared she thought nothing could be more easily determined, though she forbore to decide which. Instantly her opinion was espoused by one-half of the company, and opposed by the other, and a conflict commenced so vehement, so agitated, so sustained with all powers of heart, soul, and voice, but all within the bounds of French politeness, that one would have imagined some question relating to the everlasting salvation of the company was at stake. It was indeed to them a question of much more importance, for it related to the glory of a popular author.

Digitized by Google

The debate ran so high, that De Viosmenil, who possessed some taste for English quietness in conversation, proposed putting it to the vote. Zaira determined *against those who cease to please*, and De Courcy *against those who cease to be pleased;* and this hypocrisy of mutual politeness, by which each tried to avoid wounding the other, and expressed sentiments just opposite to their own, settled the matter with De Viosmenil. Some of the party went in the evening to the Theatre Française. De Courcy went with them; and on his return to a *petit souper* where most of them were re-assembled, De Courcy was eagerly interrogated on a subject always near and dear to Parisian hearts—their theatre, their Talma, their actresses—Mademoiselle Duchesnois or Mademoiselle George, for life and death—which? Eulalie, with her delicious suppressed voice, spoke with graceful rapture of Mademoiselle George—"Sa belle taille—sa beauté eclatante—ah, il me

Digitized by Google

semble, qu'elle est la divinité du theatre—Mademoiselle George!"

There appeared to De Courcy something generous in this praise of personal beauty, which the company in a moment referred by their eyes to Zaira; and he felt no less delighted than amazed by this tacit homage to the superior beauty of Zaira, in a female who possessed so large a share of it herself. Unacquainted himself with the peculiarities of the French stage, and struck rather by the physical than dramatic powers of the performers, he decided readily in favour of the superior grace and majesty of Mademoiselle George. He had not heard Zaira's testimony of the far superior powers of Mademoiselle Duchesnois. Eulalie, proud of his suffrage in favour of her favourite, carried all before her in her own small circle; and, elated by her success, ventured far out of her depth, and risked a few vapid superficial remarks on Racine and Shakespeare. Foolish and

Digitized by Google

presumptuous, she knew as little of Shakespeare as Frenchwomen usually do; and as little did she know before whom she ventured her rash, crude criticisms. Zaira had sat silent and abstracted, taking little notice, and less share in the conversation; since she heard De Courcy's preference of Mademoiselle George, while her own of Mademoiselle Duchesnois was unnoticed. How little pleasure she felt *then* in the looks of the company, who had referred to her all the homage bestowed on the beauty of Mademoiselle George! She now saw De Courcy, as she thought, bending in delighted attention to Eulalie's feeble observations. He was, in fact, bending forward to conceal his shame of their weakness, while he still flattered her by the appearance of attention.

Zaira tried to collect herself. She believed, vainly believed, that this was a trial of mind, and that she could in a moment silence the "puny battle" of her antagonist.

Digitized by Google

She entered into the conversation; she felt, or imagined, she had been too silent, too abstracted—that her intellectual superiority would at once fix De Courcy. She trembled to think that she might lose him by suffering a momentary declension of those mental powers which had won him once, and which might win him still. She spoke—she opened the vast volumes of her mind, enriched with intellectual treasures "passing that of women;" she displayed all her powers—all her eloquence—all her literature; she exhausted antiquity—traversed the wide domain of modern knowledge with the step of a queen who came to receive its homage and collect its tributes, and returned with its ample stores, to lay them, as she hoped, not at the shrine of public applause, but at the feet of him she loved. The circle applauded—loudly applauded; Eulalie was silent—timidly silent.

Zaira, whose eye was traversing the

Digitized by Google

groupe with the pride she had once felt, and the mingled apprehension which she now began to feel, rested it on De Courcy. That ark was of more value to her than the world she had encircled, and found a waste. *His* eyes were fixed on Eulalie with an expression of sympathy, of commiseration, so sincere, so tender, so respectful, that Zaira would gratefully have exchanged her triumph for a share in that glance so pitying, though so humiliating.

Thus the distinction of sexes is preserved even in minds; a woman must always be the object of protection; and all Zaira's intellectual superiority was at that moment a sacrifice to the weakness of her rival.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

Ειγρετο δ'εξ υπνυ θειη δε μιν αμφεχυτ' ομφη.
HOMER.

DE COURCY carried away at least one salutary impression from the preceding evening. He felt his intellectual taste revive; he was ashamed any longer, in the centre of Paris, to waste his days in sights and his nights at the theatres. He resolved to shut himself up and study their literature; for he felt that, in the society that surrounded Zaira, there was a perpetual demand for it, and that the Parisians, though not intellectual, are always literary. He kept his resolution for two days, (as long as resolutions of that kind are usually kept,) and was then tempted out to

Digitized by Google

hear a lecture of the Abbé Sicard. The lecture was very long, but De Courcy's attention never remitted; the sparkling intelligence and varying expression of his features struck the Abbé, contrasted with the usual immobility of English countenances, and he was flattered by an attention more profound than the generality of his countrymen could bring themselves to pay. He spoke of him after the lecture with all the enthusiasm of gratitude, and exerted himself so effectually in his favour, that in a few days De Courcy found himself in a circle more retired,—more exclusive certainly, but far more intellectual than he had yet met in Paris. Among them was a M. d'Orbessan, a man of whom De Courcy felt disposed to reverse the French sentence, and admit "he was not English, but well deserved to be so." His candour, humility, strict morals, and unobtruded literature, were a rarity in a metropolis—the greatest of all in Paris. He was preparing a trans-

Digitized by Google

lation of Shakespeare, and sometimes condescended to shew De Courcy passages of his work. He was in no danger of abusing his original with the petulant and jealous impotence of Voltaire, or of falling into the errors of those translators who render "pale and woe-begone!"—*pale, et douleur allez vous-en*,—and "Still, slavery, thou art a bitter draught"—*tranquille esclavage*, &c. and brogue (the Irish accent) "*sabet*." But still he was ignorant of many colloquial peculiarities and idiomatic niceties of the language, and gratefully accepted the respectful assistance of De Courcy.

One day that the latter dined with M. d'Orbessan and a number of literary men, the conversation turned on English poetry. De Courcy was amazed at the ignorance they betrayed, and hurt to find it was the ignorance of pride; they appeared to know we had a Shakespeare, of whom one of them quoted Voltaire's acknowledgment of the few pearls he had found on his enormous dunghill, (which De Courcy answer-

Digitized by Google

ed in the well-known words of Mrs Montague, "*Ce'st un fumier qui a fertilisé une terre bien ingrate*"); and they spoke of Young's Night Thoughts with an enthusiasm that astonished De Courcy. But they appeared actually ignorant that England could boast of a modern poet; and when De Courcy repeated the names of Byron, Scott, Moore, Wilson, Wordsworth, Southey, &c. it sounded to them like Alcandrumque, Haliumque, Noemonaque, Prytanimque. De Courcy then recited passages from their works, with which he was well acquainted; and, in the ardour of the moment, risked a French translation. This, though imperfect and inadequate, as extempore translation must be, charmed the hearts of his French auditors in a moment. His fluency delighted them, and his command of their language raised him in a moment far higher in their estimation than the most profound acquaintance, the most exquisite sensibility of the literary

Digitized by Google

treasures of his own. There was a mixture of animation and diffidence in his delivery that enchanted them; it seemed as if he was asking pardon of their language for the liberty he took in making it the vehicle of English poetry. M. d'Orbessan, in particular, was delighted by the display of talents he had always divined and appreciated; and, after looking at De Courcy for some moments, he exclaimed with emotion, "Ah, mon Dieu, quelle pitie!"

"Pity!" the word struck on De Courcy's ears; how had he rendered himself an object of pity? He blushed, and wondered why he blushed; attempted to speak to M. d'Orbessan, and felt he knew not what to say; at length he articulated, "He knew not how he had merited the honour of M. d'Orbessan's pity."

M. d'Orbessan bowed, executed an indescribable French shrug, took snuff repeatedly, and the conversation gradually was renewed.

Digitized by Google

The next day, De Courcy took an early opportunity of questioning him on the subject of his exclamation the preceding evening. The good-natured, warm-hearted Frenchman viewed him with a look of infinite compassion. "Monsieur will then pardon the liberty a stranger takes in feeling an infinite interest for him."

"Pardon, M. d'Orbessan! I am grateful—honoured by the interest you feel for me—permit me to prove how grateful."

"Then, Monsieur, is it not a pity that a young man, who might distinguish himself in society a thousand ways, should choose to achieve distinction by being announced to all dissipated Paris as the favourite of an actress?"

"The favourite of an actress!" repeated De Courcy in horror, as the meaning of these words indistinctly opened on him.

"Your ingenuous blushes refute a thousand calumnies in a moment," said d'Orbessan; "but will you then permit me to

Digitized by Google

ask on what terms you are with Madame Dalmatiani?"

"Terms with Madame Dalmatiani!" repeated de Courcy, gasping with feelings he could not utter. "What terms? we are friends."

The Frenchman looked first incredulous, and then commiserating,—"Friends! —that friendship must be pure indeed, which subsists between a young man of nineteen and a beautiful female, without a construction far different from what, doubtless, their own purity justifies, and would merit. Madame Dalmatiani is beautiful, unmarried (*at present*;) you, sir, are young and interesting—you are always together, though neither united by blood or marriage."

"Stop, sir," said De Courcy; "you have said Madame Dalmatiani is unmarried at present. What is your meaning? or have you a meaning?"

"I mean," said d'Orbessan, "simply, that

Digitized by Google

Madame Dalmatiani was married before; —that she had a child,—and that no one knows what is become of her husband or her child."

At these words De Courcy rushed from the house in a species of fury and despair. He felt what he could not describe—a sense of imposition, of indignity incredible, intolerable. He—a gentleman, a man of birth and blood, well-descended, well-educated, of pretensions that would justify his addresses to the first females in his own country, (whom after all he began to think the best,) and to appear abroad as the minion of an actress—on the Catharine of Russia system—loathsome, degrading, disgusting—and she was married before, and had a child, and no one knew any thing of her husband and child. Neither had ever been mentioned to him. And was he to be the successor to—he knew not whom or what?—and then a child. Zaira had never mentioned she was a mother—what a

Digitized by Google

mother—what a woman—and all unknown to me! Oh, Eva! from your purity of heart, from your sanctity of manners, could I ever have experienced such a discovery—such a disappointment! He hurried to his hotel; a message was there from Zaira, entreating him to accompany her to some party; he flung it away. A letter from Mr Asgill; *that* he opened, read, and felt every line, every word of. Some of the words were these:—

* * * * * *

"I no longer adopt the style of a guardian, I address you as a friend. Of the preceding part of your conduct, I shall say nothing; because I could not say what would not be more painful to myself than to you. You must have hardened your heart against all reproach before you left Ireland. I shall forbear reproaches. I speak in the hope, not of saving you from re-

Digitized by Google

morse for the past, but from ruin for the future. I have hopes you are not yet married; if you are not, I adjure you fly from that dangerous woman, that enchantress, who intoxicates you that she may turn you into a brutal slave of passion. Fly from her, renounce her, her habits, her influence, her country, every thing belonging to her.

"Think, rash, inebriated boy, of the consequence of being united to an actress.—Illiberal—illiberal—your polished, continental society will say. Be it so; I submit to be called so; I hope, I pray, that the world, on some points, may always be thus illiberal. I know the name of a profession is nothing; a diplomatist may be sincere, and an attorney may be honest; but the habits of a profession are every thing. Such is the peculiar delicacy, the natural domesticity of the female character, that a woman, who can give herself up to the public display of her person and talents for bread,

Digitized by Google

who can inhale the coarse and fetid air of a bravoing theatre as her vital breath, has departed from the character of a woman, has almost forfeited the privileges of her sex. I am convinced that a great part of our moral character depends on the kind of applause we are accustomed to seek and enjoy. *Laudatus a laudandis*, is a glorious distinction of the human character. Can it be applied to a woman who must be indebted to her physical powers for half her popularity, who is accustomed to the perpetual praises of her beauty, not in the whisper of timid delight, but in the shouts of a theatre? The life of such a woman must be passed in intervals of exhaustion and excitement. She has not a moment's pause for calm reflection, for domestic tranquillity, for that sober certainty of waking bliss that women were formed by Heaven to feel and to communicate. She is a creature out of her place,—a fine, abused, glittering, wretched being,—a thing produced

Digitized by Google

like the fish at the Roman banquets, to delight the unfeeling guest with its brilliancy and its agony. Theatres must be, in all civilized countries—a necessary evil—(and, like most evils, tolerated to prevent worse) and there must be actresses too—but why need we marry them? why need we break down the barriers that society has fixed between actors and audience? Would it be a seemly sight to see this confusion at the theatre? Is it not a scandalous sight to see it in the world, where the evil is tenfold greater?

"Your Zaira has quitted the stage, I hear. Well—but can such a woman ever *be off the stage?*—Will not the mimetic habits, studied attitudes, artificial feelings, and insatiable thirst for indiscriminating applause accompany her every where? But she is a woman of genius—so much the worse ten thousand times. The pride and pretensions of a woman of literature, grafted on the second-hand sentimentality and

Digitized by Google

factitious existence of an actress, would be enough to drive a saint out of his senses; and you are no saint, De Courcy. I am not fastidious; I honour literature, *a quâ confiteor nullam partem meæ ætatis abhorruisse.* I do not condemn the stage, under certain restrictions; but never would I wish to meet an actress but on the stage, or encounter an author but in his works. Louis XIV. said no man could be a great man to his valet-de-chambre. The littlenesses of those people when taken off the stilts, on which our imagination and their own vanity have helped to prop them, are intolerably mean, irritating, and disgusting. A literary woman professed, I should perhaps like to meet once or twice in mixt company; but never at my dinner-table, if I wished for a comfortable meal; never at my fire-side, if I wished for peace.

"Illa tamen gravior, quæ, cum discumbere cœpit,
Laudat Virgilium, perituræ ignoscit Elisæ,

Digitized by Google

Committit vates, et comparat inde Maronem,
Atque alia parte in trutina suspendit Homerum.
Cedunt grammatici, vincuntur rhetores, omnis
Turba tacet, nec causidicus, nec præco loquatur
Altera nec mulier."

"A woman of literature is infinitely more insupportable than a man; for, to the pride and irritability of an author, is superadded the prescriptive distinction of her sex, that homage with which women in civilized society are intoxicated from their very cradles.

"Oh, my dear De Courcy! my heart is wrung at this moment at the thought that my advice is, perhaps, coming too late. If it be so; if you are married, return to Ireland; bring with you your wife, and I will be the first to meet and welcome her with an aching heart. If you are not, leave her, leave her this moment, and for ever! for God's sake, for your country's sake, and for your own, leave her! Let not Europe witness the shameful spectacle of an inde-

Digitized by Google

pendent man, a gentleman, trailed over the continent in the wake of an actress, the overgrown pupil of a female pedagogue. Let not the country that can boast a Grattan, a Curran, a Moore, an Edgeworth, a Lady Morgan, a Philips, a Sheil, reckon a character so degraded among those of her children!

"E. ASGILL."

De Courcy answered this letter immediately, delighted to find an excuse for his feelings even in the reproaches of another. He announced his intention of returning to Ireland; he did not speak either of Zaira or of Eva; he dared not; self-degradation assailed him when he thought either of his connection with the one, or his desertion of the other. A thousand things rushed on his mind while writing, that flushed his cheek, that "doubly dyed it with imperial crimson." The hints, the repeated hints of his being "*un homme des bonnes fortunes*;"

Digitized by Google

the constant suspicious deference to his opinions in Zaira; the doubtful homage; the invidious submission; the guarded manner of the old; the jealous sneers of the young—all—how could he have been insensible to them! it was madness, stupefaction.

All the day following, Zaira's billets came to enquire into the cause of his absence, and came unanswered. He was resolved to quit her—he knew not how—he dreaded that the next interview with her would overthrow his resolution—he dreaded, he bewailed, from the bottom of his heart, the total want of resolution in his character, the misery it must cause to others, the misery it had caused to himself. He remained the whole day in a state of gloomy irresolution, satisfied with but one decisive step he had taken; he had written to Mr Asgill, he had sent off his letter, and he was determined to abide by its contents, and quit the continent, where he had left

Digitized by Google

peace, character, and manly fame, for ever behind him.

Zaira, her notes unanswered, and molested all day by visitors whose presence was torture to her, sought refuge in her usual habits, and prepared to go to that last splendid party which was given to the Russian nobles the night before they were to follow the emperor on his way to England. While dressing, she made a thousand excuses to herself, disbelieved them all, and again repeated them to herself as she would to a stranger whom she was trying humanely to impose on. Perhaps this was the first night she felt the influence of her feelings predominate over that of her habits; her beauty, her genius, never met with more homage, yet she was wretched—but still she persisted in exacting the tribute always paid her in society with a kind of splenetic triumph—never had she felt so anxious for distinction, yet never so indifferent to it. Strange paradox of the human

Digitized by Google

heart, or rather of the human mind, that can prey on the spoils of feeling, and sit at the banquet with terrible gaiety, aggravated by the sight of the hand-writing on the wall that at once dooms and excites it. When destiny is thus armed against us, we seem to take a melancholy pleasure in rushing to the fight, though we feel the battle is lost.

The Russians whom Zaira met were not literary men, but they were sufficiently impressed with her literary fame to attend to her with the deepest interest,—the interest of curiosity, if not of feeling; and they knew the literature of their own country. Zaira struggled to remember the *success* of Voltaire, who, when conversing with Russian noblemen who lamented the sterility of their country, observed, that it had at least been fruitful in laurels. She exerted herself—she tried to recal some traces that once had existed in her memory of Rus-

Digitized by Google

sian literature. They had all escaped her; she remembered but two trifling anecdotes, but the grace and spirit with which she told them made them interesting.

Knowing that uncivilized nations are most flattered by the praise of refinement, she mentioned, as a proof of it, the inscription on the medals of the Russian officers, who, having defeated the Turks in a naval engagement, were desired to wear on their reverse the words, "I was there,"—simple and sublime memorial! Then she adverted to the rings, the mourning rings, worn on the death of Catherine, which bore the motto, "Paul consoles me." Then feeling her success, she passed on to the lighter compositions of the Russians, and repeated the singular political satire, in the form of a ballad, whose profaneness may almost be forgiven for its humour.

"God starting from sleep at a great noise, asked the angel Gabriel the cause of it; and the angel answered, the Rus-

Digitized by Google

sians are at war with the Turks; and God answered, Who leads the Russians? and Gabriel said, the Prince G——; then God turned himself to sleep again. A great noise was again heard; the Deity started up, made the same enquiry, was answered again by the angel, the Russians are at war with the Turks. Who leads my beloved Russians now? said God; and Gabriel answered, the Prince P——, (Zaira took care to mention no names, for she knew nothing of the political or family connections of those whom she was addressing,)—then said God, Get me my boots, Gabriel, for *now I must go myself.*"

The Russians were delighted with this reference to what they knew; it was seldom they met with it in Paris; the Parisians were too full of themselves. Zaira seemed to have naturalized them in the midst of a city so unlike Petersburgh. Music followed; the Russians are musical, and ample justice was done to her by her delighted

Digitized by Google

audience. Some of them expressed their pleasure in those exaggerated phrases, that false or defective sensibility loves to shelter itself in. They talked of muses, and the strains of Orpheus, and melting rocks, and listening trees, and "such branches of learning." Zaira looked disconcerted.

"It is classical praise," said De Viosmenil.

"And for that very reason the last I would wish to hear. The ancients, possessing either a very limited knowledge, or a feeble sensibility, never describe the powers of music but by their effects on physical creation. They speak of their influence on rocks and forests, on which they could have no influence, but to add a thrilling power to their echoes; but they never tell us that music sent one image to the memory, or one feeling to the heart; that they loved to listen to it when it trembled over the surface of a wave, or lent a charm to moonlight."

Digitized by Google

When she got to the ancients, her Russian auditory soon quitted her. Dancing, in which they are national adepts, followed, and Zaira was waltzing with a Russian officer when De Courcy entered the room. He was glad to see it; he felt himself justified in leaving her to "a world she loved so well." As he gazed on the brilliant scene, another image involuntarily rose on his mind, like the deities in Homer,

"Οιω φαινομενη, των δ'αλλων ουτις ορατο."

It was the form of Eva; how unlike those around him! He started as if he actually beheld her, hurried into the crowd, and sought to lose himself in noise and glare. That night his manner to Zaira was unusually soft. Thus it is that we feel disposed to palliate the blow when we are determined to strike it with mortal violence. The unfortunate Zaira, deluded, and happy in delusion, resigned herself to all the in-

Digitized by Google

toxication of delight. When we love, we need no language to describe the changes of the heart; to us the eye alone, and in a moment, the very moment we meet it, announces our destiny. So Zaira imagined, and perhaps she trusted to the language of the eyes, with as much reason as others trust the language of the lips. De Courcy attended her home; he said nothing that might lead to an explanation; perhaps he dreaded that an explanation might justify her, and leave him without an excuse; perhaps he wanted a pretext, and when we do we are not very nice in the choice of one. He saw her to the door of her apartment, and took his leave with a tenderness, in which Zaira, blinded by imaginary happiness, did not discover the melancholy of involuntary remorse. After he retired, she returned to her anti-chamber for a book; a piece of paper lay on the floor, she took it up. De Courcy, like many other per-

Digitized by Google

sons, was in the habit of trying over and over again the pens he was writing with, and of tracing on the paper on which he tried them some lines of the letter he was engaged in. He had written thus on a piece of paper, (while answering Mr Asgil,) "*I am weary, sick to the soul of my present situation; I shall fly from it as soon as possible.*"

He had retained the lines about him accidentally, and dropt them in Zaira's anti-chamber. She took them up; read them;—*they were his own words, written by his own hand.* No escape, no retreat from conviction—not a gleam of hope—and in the moment of her happiness, in a moment when his smile had been the pledge of renewed tenderness. *Impossible*—she took up the paper again—*certain.* How dreadful when the mind thus calls on hope, and is answered by despair—when it appeals to the mercy of doubt, and is repelled by the tyranny of absolute certitude!

Digitized by Google

She stood with her eyes fixed on the paper till she could stand no longer; all was mist and darkness round her; she did not see the chair she sunk on. Accustomed to strong efforts, she struggled for the resumption of her reason, and attained some degree of consciousness—horrible consciousness. The first moments of such returning recollection are like the first moments of those who recover after fainting on the rack. They hoped it was death, but are tortured into existence by pain; the grating of the iron that is to renew their sufferings, invades their ears almost before they have recovered the sense of hearing. She awoke, she felt she lived, and her first sensation was a horror of life. She rose, and walked rapidly up and down the room; violent pain always impels to motion; she looked round on every object, to convince herself that they filled the same apartment in which he had just quitted her. On the walls, on the ceiling, on the floor,

Digitized by Google

on the furniture, on every thing above, below, around her, she saw legibly the same words traced, shifting, revolving, burning before her eyes, the same words, "I shall fly from it as soon as possible." She felt terrified at the increasing number, rapidity, and fiery light of the characters. She quitted the room, and went into a balcony filled with flowers; their fragrance and beauty seemed to reproach her wretchedness; she gazed upward on the sky, but the same letters were there. She looked up at the stars with a feeble reminiscence of the delight that the view had once given her; it was in vain—she could indeed see the stars, but she felt their beauty no longer. She retired to her room, and passed the remainder of that horrible night walking up and down the apartment, as if she was in search of something. The lights burnt out; she paused and drew aside the curtains,—the pale, but lovely light of the morning, came gleaming on, smiling at, mocking her. She

Digitized by Google

leaned her head against the edge of the window, but felt not the relief of tears. The day advanced without her being able to fix one idea in her mind, to form one plan. She expected every moment to see him enter and announce her fate. He came, as he usually did, but earlier than usual; she advanced to meet him, almost convulsed with emotion; she was instantly calmed by the perfect unconsciousness of his look. He knew nothing of her having seen the paper and being apprized of his intentions. He was surprised at her agitation, and to have seen them, one would have imagined that it was she who was about to enter on a subject of emotion, and he who was about to listen.

He came to enquire into her arrangements for the day; and then she tried to recollect what *would have been* her plans the day before. He appeared to listen to them with pleasure, engaged to join in some of them, and retired just as

Digitized by Google

others were entering. In one moment Zaira passed from despair to delight. Not a word of explanation;—not a hint had been given. It was impossible that he could be determined to desert her, that he could visit her with so little emotion on the eve of separation. "Impossible,—impossible!" repeated the wretched Zaira; "and with those eyes and with that voice!—Their expression still unaltered, their tones still so delicious. Impossible—I will distrust my own senses first. It was scrawled in a moment without thought;—it relates to something else;—it was a quotation;—it was not his hand;—no matter what it was;—I am the happiest of women." And the happiest of women she was all that day and all night; and who can say that her happiness was not as well founded as that of those who might deride its hollowness and fallacy?

De Courcy was unusually soft and tender in his manner; this was a good omen,

Digitized by Google

but every thing would have been a good omen in her present state of excitement. Her penetration was blinded by her hopes, or she would have discovered that his accent and manner were exactly like those of a physician who softens his tone when compelled to pronounce there is no hope. For many days she struggled to impose on herself—(miserable imposition!) Fought the dubious battle of decreasing hopes and increasing fears—lived on a look—treasured a whisper—weighed glance with glance—existed but on the chance of hope that his looks supplied, when their expression denoted any thing but a thought of her—watched his conversation when addressed to strangers, and tried to extort a confirmation of her hopes from all, that rightly understood, would have realized her fears. Then hope itself could no longer deceive her; her heart began to fail her; certain decisive indications appeared in his manner. Perhaps he thought that unless

Digitized by Google

he undeceived her, she never would undeceive herself; perhaps he thought that when cruelty is brief, it is like mercy. At all events, his manner could no longer be misunderstood. In despair, Zaira shut herself up for one day, the most horrible she ever had past—the desolation of her mind was united with that of her heart. Every thing she saw gave her a sensation of mingled fear, pain, and repelling sense of hostility and vacancy together, inconceivable, except to those who have suffered like her. Such sufferings have been.

That day De Viosmenil called; his intimacy justified his advancing to her apartment unannounced. Zaira fled from it on hearing the sound of his voice; the sight of a friend gives us horror in the first disappointment of passion; then we feel how inferior is every resource that human life, in all its infinite variety of relations, can offer, and the contrast is an insult to our agony. On the sofa which she had just quitted,

Digitized by Google

De Viosmenil found only a handkerchief drenched in her tears, and a volume of Lord Byron's poems. He knew English literature well; he took it up,—it was open at the notes,—the note where that great poet mentions, in prose as affecting as his poetry is sublime, the grief of his wild attendant on their separation,—the simple thrilling expression of that grief—M'αφιστι—"*He leaves me.*" The page was still wet with Zaira's tears, and the words were distinguished by reiterated pencil lines.

De Viosmenil comprehended the whole in a moment, and on the spot he wrote a letter to Madame St Maur, to entreat her, as her suit was likely to terminate favourably, to hasten instantly to Paris; and he added, that her presence might be necessary to *console* Zaira. Madame St Maur, on receiving this letter, lost not a moment in hastening to Paris; the very hour she arrived she hurried to Zaira's residence. Zaira understood the meaning of

Digitized by Google

this sudden journey, this abrupt appearance, and flinging herself into the arms of the affectionate, but French-hearted woman, (whose feelings actually deprived her of speech, the greatest sacrifice perhaps a French woman ever made, even to friendship,) she wept in agony. Madame St Maur wept too, like a good-natured child, who weeps because those it loves are shedding tears.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

L'ultima che si perde è la speranza.—TASSO.

MADAME ST MAUR's advice was good, so was De Viosmenil's; but people give advice in a cold reluctant way when they are forced to advise on the consequences of a step the direct opposite to what they have recommended. They cannot help giving solemn credit to their own sagacity, even in the very condolence they administer on its being neglected. Then followed the wretched expedients of beauty dreading the decline of its power. Grief made her humble; she was terrified out of all reliance on her mental powers;—they had deceived her;—perhaps they had revolted him. She tried

Digitized by Google

to attract by her exterior; she varied her costume, but nothing now seemed to become her. A thousand times, listening to the hopes of others rather than her own, or drawing temporary good omens from his silence, she reasoned herself, by resolute sophistry, into the belief that he would not desert her; and just as she arrived at this conviction, the thought of the *lines in his own hand* would stab her like a dagger.

Often she tried to derive the impossibility of his leaving her, from *her* having herself given no cause for it. What folly!—When men desert women, it is sufficient that the *cause is in themselves.* Often she said to herself, "What have I done unto thee, or wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me." She did not know that it was enough that he *was* wearied. Once, when they were accidentally alone together for a moment, she resolved on speaking to him; one simple word would have done it,

Digitized by Google

but a thousand came rushing to her throat, and choaked all utterance; she tried to throw out all her genius and her passion in one appeal of eloquent agony; and all failed her. A woman of less talent and less feeling would have spoken with ease. The sudden change of her expression, the dumb anguish of her look, were understood by De Courcy, but not answered. He turned away—some others entered—the opportunity was lost.

She still continued to appear with him at assemblies, at the theatres, at lectures, everywhere where popularity flattered her with the hopes her heart was hourly feeling the falsehood of; she clung like declining royalty to forms, as she felt its power was diminishing. They went together the next day to hear a popular preacher. The preachers were now resuming their influence, and displaying their eloquence in Paris. Bourdaloue and Massillon were ex-

Digitized by Google

pected to revive under the auspicious shade of the lily once more.

The preacher was very eloquent, unlike the preachers of the continent, who waste their talents in panegyrising a saint whom no one cares three straws about. He took his subject from the charities of domestic life, of which all are doomed to enjoy the blessing, or bitterly to feel the want. His text was from St Peter, "Be pitiful, be courteous." There was much mention of the Bourbons, delightful to the ears of many, gratin to the ears of more. He cared not how he brought them in; it was in 1814, and all was well. At last he came to the subject. He spoke of the religion of Christ, of its power to diffuse, not only its blessedness over the mind, but over the manners of mankind. He compared it to the precious oil that was poured, not merely on Aaron's head, but went down to the skirts of his clothing. He exclaimed, "Oh,

Digitized by Google

that we felt how much misery we may cause in life, and how little happiness it is in our power to bestow! Even when, from the force of destiny, from the irresistible vicissitudes of life, we are compelled to be the cause of unhappiness to our fellow-creatures, how much of their wretchedness may be palliated by the manner of its in-infliction! If we must draw the bow, we need not barb the dart with cruelty; we need not dip it in the poison of wilful hostility; we must often smite our victims in life, but let us smite them like a sacrificing priest, not like an immolating foe."

At these words the wretched Zaira turned her eyes all bathed in tears on De Courcy; *his* were averted. He was remarking to De Viosmenil the peculiarity of the *chairs* hired in the French churches to the congregation, and making a comparison, not at all favourable to the former, between this arrangement so theatrical, and

Digitized by Google

the quiet decent accommodation in the pews of English churches. After this she gave up all hope of touching his heart by a public appeal—she trusted to she knew not what—she was conscious of a power, a depth of passion in her own heart, whose resources, if once developed, if once displayed to him, must infallibly affect him.

"If he would but hear me!" said she to Madame St Maur; "if I could but pour out before him the thoughts that are devouring my heart, he might not love, but he must pity me; he could not banish me; he would suffer me to follow as a slave."

A slave!—thus the image of subjection always recurs to a woman, when the temporary triumph to which men raise her is over; with subjection her course began, and with that it is doomed to end. Madame St Maur strongly opposed this desperate step of throwing herself on her lover's mercy. She urged many reasons,

Digitized by Google

drawn from the wit and habits of Frenchwomen and Frenchmen; she had better have urged one plain reason, drawn from the nature of men and women in general—that when we rush to prostrate ourselves with hearts all on fire before those to whose hearts we cannot communicate a single spark, it appears like a dramatic scene where we are the sole actors, and, wanting sympathy, we almost begin to appear like impostors to ourselves. Thus the hope of appeal, of explanation, was altogether given up, and she lingered through a few days more of misery, during which she tried to find a shelter in his silence. "He has not *spoken*," said she to herself; "all may be well."

Wretched resource! when we imagine we shall not be deserted, because those who announce it a thousand other ways, have not announced it in words. That hour at last came. One evening at De Viosmenil's, Eu-

Digitized by Google

lalie de Tonranges, who was a violent Buonapartist, was mentioning, as the chief glory of his dynasty, that he had accumulated the spoils of all Europe in Paris, and thus reduced the tour of the continent to a visit to the metropolis of France,—as if men ought to have their throats cut for the sublime consolation, that, after their death, their plundered property would be carried off to embellish Paris.

"You will not now," said she to De Courcy, "have to visit Italy to see an Apollo or a Venus de Medici."

"It is no longer my intention to visit Italy," said De Courcy firmly.

"Not visit Italy!" repeated the whole party, with various feelings, and in different discordant keys of amazement—"not visit Italy!—but what then?—where do you purpose to go?"

"I purpose—soon—to return to Ireland," said De Courcy, his voice gaining firmness as he announced his resolution.

Digitized by Google

"Ireland!—Ireland!" was echoed by all in such tones of horror, as if the place of his destination had been Pandemonium—"Ireland!" all were in a moment in arms against the thought. Eulalie expostulated, in her most seductive tones, against it; for she felt that when he quitted the continent, she must lose him for ever. M. d'Orbessan opposed it with manly reasoning; for he wished his mind to be enriched by varied imagery, and his character strengthened by acquaintance with life. And the generous suffering friendship of Madame St Maur and De Viosmenil inspired them with unavailing eloquence. Zaira's cause could not have been supported with more zeal, had they been pleading for their own lives. They read her doom in this resolution, and they struggled hard to avert it with zealous energy and fruitless kindness. They brought him to confess, that Ireland was a country where one could neither find intellectual or physical luxury; where the inha-

Digitized by Google

bitants were neither cultivated enough to furnish the refinements of continental, or rich enough to supply the comforts of English life, (which they allowed rather grudgingly, and obliged to naturalize the word *comfort* with a very indifferent grace;) they brought him to confess, that, as an orphan, he had no ties of nature; as a man of taste and literature, he could have no enjoyment there. —Granted—he granted all—"What then could be his motive? what *could* be his motive?" repeated all the voices; their various tones of selfishness, disinterestedness, curiosity, and affection, mingling in one common tide of vehement enquiry.

"It is my country," said De Courcy; and, as he uttered these words, the expression of his beautiful and heroic features seemed to announce a sentiment which he did not feel. He spoke merely to get rid of their importunity. The French taste for *sentiment* swallowed up all other feelings;

Digitized by Google

when he spoke, all applauded eagerly, all but Madame St Maur, who, with proud and generous indignation, retired, and seated herself beside Zaira, who had heard all. Zaira pressed her friend's hand in her cold one. The room was so spacious they could speak without observation.

"Yes," said Zaira, her tears dropping fast on the hand she held—"yes, my dear, my generous friend, I feel your kindness at my broken heart—I see the generous useless efforts your friendship is prompting you to make—it is all over. I am like the man in Lewis's tale of the Anaconda, who knew in his horrible retreat, surrounded by the serpent, all his friends were doing, and knew all was done in vain. His misery was only aggravated by the struggles for his relief; mine is aggravated too," said she, weeping more bitterly, "by the feeling that my crushed heart has not room now even for gratitude."

Digitized by Google

That night De Courcy went to the Theatre Feydeau; the entertainments passed before him like figures in a magic lantern. He was weary of glare, excitement, attraction; he wished for repose, but his heart denied him that. His powers, both physical and mental, had been too early excited; his fluctuation of character was not entirely criminal—too easily excited, too early developed by love, beauty, and genius, he felt too early the miserable misanthropy of premature excitement. Excitement to men may be useful, to boys it must be fatal. Sir Philip Mordaunt thus, in early youth, tasted the cup of life, was disgusted, and perished by his own hand. As De Courcy retired from the theatre, he observed some one was following him; he turned; he caught a glimpse of the figure; it was a female. A faint dread of an explanation, which he was determined to avoid, stole over him whenever the steps of a female were heard fol-

Digitized by Google

lowing him in the streets of Paris. He stopt; muffled as the figure was, he caught a glimpse of Zaira's features; he hurried on; the sobs of the muffled female followed, but did not make him turn. It is impossible to say how low love may reduce a woman.

When, the next day, Madame St Maur, who had sense enough left to see that a man could not be persecuted into love, expostulated with her on this desperate step, Zaira answered her, in wretched desperation, "Yes, I am sunk so low; I cannot hide it from myself; why should I try to hide it from others? Yes, I am degraded;" and she repeated it with *that ferocity against herself*, that leaves no room for reproach from others. "I am degraded—I am sunk even to the bare hope—the miserable wish that he may still remain—remain in my sight, barely in my sight, though lost to my hopes forever. Let me be placed where

Digitized by Google

I may but see him—merely see him. Let me but catch the shadow of his passing figure on the wall, that figure which contains all perfection. Let me but hear the sound of his voice, though never addressed to me. Let me but kiss the earth where his steps have been impressed. Let him but stay—stay where I may see him;" she repeated in wild agony, and with convulsive action—" and I am resigned;—Let him marry, and I will crouch in some corner of the church to gaze on his bride; and if he has a child—how I would idolize his child! I would be a mother to it—Alas! I might have been its mother."

Madame St Maur could not reason with feelings she never knew; she was terrified, —" hopeless she spoke of hope"—all hope was vain. Zaira grew worse, she became delirious; her friend then determined to watch that night by her miserable bed; but the day was as bad as the night, and the following night she was much worse.

Digitized by Google

Madame St Maur never quitted her: the French terror of fever seemed to make an exception in her case; she watched her friend incessantly, and stole down every moment to enquire whether De Courcy had called. The call was not so punctual as she could wish, but she always went up with a flattering message. He had called, was in a hurry; *she* (*Madame St Maur*,) had great difficulty in keeping him from rushing to her apartment. When nothing better could be said, she assured Zaira that he was waiting in the anti-chamber, and that she would not suffer him to enter. That night—(the third night)—Zaira was in a state of stupor till a late hour; her attendants then undressed her, and Madame St Maur sat by her bedside. Zaira started up after a few minutes perturbed rest, and eagerly enquired after Madame St Maur's mother. Madame St Maur imagined this was delirium, and she replied that her mother was

Digitized by Google

in Languedoc, and was well. Zaira was silent for a long time, and then said, in a feeble tone, "I was dreaming of my own mother—I am not superstitious; but I never dreamt of that most unfortunate woman, that her image was not a precursor of some calamity."

Madame St Maur had never heard her speak of her mother before; but her sense of Zaira's sufferings was stronger than her curiosity, and she forbore to make any enquiries. Zaira slept soon after, but in a short time her sleep became dreadfully disturbed; her features were distorted and her respiration was a groan. Madame St Maur, terrified by the state in which she saw her, awoke her; she started up.

"I have seen her—I have seen her!" she cried, sitting up in her bed, and grasping Madame St Maur's hand, while a terrible expression pervaded her pale fixed features.

Digitized by Google

"Seen whom?—what have you seen?" said Madame St Maur, terrified in her turn.

"Oh! that pale girl—that girl with the light hair, and blue eyes—that pale girl whom I murdered—Yes," she continued with increasing energy, as her delirium diminished; "yes, murdered, as surely as if I had thrust a sword into her heart. I saw them all; I was in Ireland again, and De Courcy was there; he offered me wine, and while I drank it he told me it was blood—blood drawn from her heart; and then he pointed to her—that pale girl—oh! she was standing near so horribly pale—and she smiled on me with her white bloodless lips—and all her friends were behind her—her religious friends, in a kind of solemn mist—they were singing a hymn, and she joined them, and they parted all in light, and left me in darkness—such darkness!"——

Madame St Maur tried to reason with

Digitized by Google

her on the folly of heeding a nervous dream.

"I am not nervous—I am not mad," said Zaira; "it was no dream. I never saw her before, yet I know her as well now as if she were sitting beside my bed, Delphine; her light hair, her blue fixed eye, her horrible whiteness, her death-like smile, and I drinking her blood, and so I did. Oh, Delphine! what have I to answer for!—My triumph has been short, and every blow that I struck on her heart, has been visited on my own, and with a mortal force."

Madame St Maur, terrified herself, exerted all her powers to sooth and compose her, and at last succeeded. She lay down again, and from exhaustion slept several hours; when she awoke, she drew aside her curtain, and saw Madame St Maur stand smiling at her bed-side.

"Oh!" said she, starting up, "you have good news for me—your salutation is like

Digitized by Google

that of the Chinese; felicity is painted on your countenance."

"De Courcy is in the anti-chamber," said Madame St Maur, smiling with affectionate delight; "he says he will wait there till he sees you, if you are able to see him."

"*If I am able!*" cried Zaira, springing up. "Oh, my dear Delphine! ring for my women; I am well, quite well; I shall be dress in a moment."

The trepidation of her eagerness delayed her preparation, and she was a little shocked when she viewed herself in the glass; her women, however, the moment they had fastened the combs in her hair, pronounced her *mise à ravir*, and she was willing to believe them. She flung a shawl round her, to hide the obvious decline of her wasted figure, and hurried to the room where De Courcy was. Their meeting was not as warm on his side as she expected; perhaps it was impossible that it could ap-

Digitized by Google

pear sufficiently so to her; but he was at least tender, anxious, and respectful. His visit, too, was of an unusual length, and when he retired, though she would have wished him to stay, she felt that her exhausted spirits could not support a longer visit, and she hoped that his consciousness of this might have induced him to shorten it. When all was over, Madame St Maur could not help flinging herself into Zaira's arms in an agony of affectionate joy. We need not say the embrace was returned. That day was happiness unmixed, without a reference to the past, without a glance at the future. The present was enough. The present always should be enough, for who can reckon on more?

Did we know what is passing in the hearts of those on whom our happiness depends, how long would that happiness last? Had they known, however, what was passing in De Courcy's, their [illegible] would not have been diminished. He was touched,

Digitized by Google

awakened, pained by the illness of Zaira. He had time for thought, and he thought it was enough that one had suffered so much by him already; he was determined to give Zaira an opportunity of explanation, to enquire about her husband (that husband of whom he felt as much indignant jealousy as if *he* had been the husband,)—and her child—if she had a child.

He felt, in his short separation from her, the suspended effect of her beauty, her talents, and her constant power of excitement. He felt that his existence with her might be disgraceful; but without her was wretched. He was resolved to lead, to listen to an explanation. M. D'Orbessan, too, terrified at his agitation and sufferings during this interval, had qualified, moderated, almost retracted—there might be a husband—he did not know—there might be a child—of that he knew still less. It might be a report—merely a report. De Courcy in vain pressed for an explicit statement;

Digitized by Google

he could not give one, and if he could he would not; he trembled at the mischief he had done, though with the best intentions.

In the mean time, De Courcy thought—he thought of the night when Zaira fainted, on receiving a letter in Dublin; of her subsequent illness; of her retirement from the stage immediately; of her hurrying so soon to France.—There was some mystery, and love can never bear a mystery in which it has no share.

Zaira's mysteries were evidently not those of love; and the old woman's frightful intrusions, and evident knowledge of Zaira—all this pressed on his mind; he was determined to know the worst—to do Zaira justice, he said; he should have said, to do justice to his own suspicions.

He *waited on* her that morning; he waited on her; (strange phrase for a meeting between those who have loved,) if possible to learn the truth; she was obviously

Digitized by Google

too ill and too much agitated to bear an explanation. He resolved to defer it; and that evening, as he was walking in the Boulevards, a group of young men passed him; one of them he immediately distinguished as not being a Frenchman; the next time he passed him, he caught a stronger view of him. De Courcy trembled with emotion; he loitered near the spot, unable to proceed for some moments. The party soon returned; he started forward; one of them, the one he had recognised, quitted the rest, started forward too, and stood face to face, and breast to breast, opposite to De Courcy. It was twilight; they saw, and yet they did not see each other's presence; it was Montgomery who stood opposite to him. A short, hurried salutation—a cold grasp of each other's hands—and a long pause followed. Then Montgomery took De Courcy's arm, and walked away with him; they walked in silence for some time.

At length De Courcy said, in a broken

Digitized by Google

voice, "How are all our friends in Ireland?"

"*Your* friends—what friends?"

"The—the Wentworths."

"Mr and Mrs Wentworth are very well."

"And"——

"Well?"

"And their niece—Miss Wentworth—Eva?"

"She is dying."

De Courcy gasped—staggered—made a faint effort to tear open his vest, and fell senseless. Montgomery, terrified, rushed to his assistance; it was long before any assistance could restore him. Montgomery bared his throat and bosom, and, supporting him on his knees, watched him in silence, not without anxiety. He had long to watch; the relaxed jaw, the white, open lips, the cheek and forehead colder than marble, the very hair, seeming to lose all

Digitized by Google

its elasticity, impressed him with the perfect ghastliness of death; and as he lay thus, Montgomery, struck with the contrast, could not forbear wondering how a being, frail and powerless as that before him, could be the cause of such sufferings to others: and reflecting on those sufferings, he almost wished him to remain so; his renewed life seemed only a pledge of renewed misery, to all whose ill-fate it was to love him. He recovered, but his recovery was more frightful than his temporary death. He recovered to the wild delirium of raving agony; he recovered to curse himself, to tear his hair, to dash himself on the ground with horrible prayers, that he might never rise alive; in a word, to exhibit the frightful picture of one who is startled from the dream of pleasure by conscience for the first time tearing open the curtains, and awakening him.

With difficulty Montgomery had him

Digitized by Google

conveyed home, with still greater difficulty did he keep him in his bed, from which he was trying to spring, determined to set out that moment for Ireland. Kneeling, grovelling in unspeakable wretchedness (when his strength totally failed,) before Montgomery, he implored to be suffered to fly and save her. Montgomery would have pitied him; but the figure of Eva, as he last saw her before he quitted Ireland, filled all his mind, and dried up his heart; besides, he felt that his sufferings, violent as they were, were physical, and therefore transient, while the sufferings he inflicted on his victims were mental, and not soon to pass away.

The next day he was exhausted—alarmingly ill—a low intermitted pulse, restlessness, mutterings—every bad indication.

Zaira, who had heard an indistinct account of his agitation, on meeting an *Irish gentleman* the evening before on the Boulevards, was at his bedside in the morning.

Digitized by Google

There the first object she saw was Montgomery; her heart sunk within her at the sight; she felt as if she met her evil genius. De Courcy was not conscious of her being there; and when the next day and the next she came, she was told that Mr De Courcy was better, but declined seeing any one but the Irish gentleman. She turned away in silence; she thought of the time when he had waited at her door on her slightest indisposition, and kissed the pencil-lines in which she had assured him of her convalescence—she went home, and waited hour after hour for a message intimating a wish to see her—it came not—then she confined her hopes to a bare answer to her enquiries after his health—none.

De Viosmenil and Madame St Maur were with her, and, in the impatience of an agonized spirit, she turned from one to the other, as if either could give those hopes that were denied by the only source that could supply them. Then she was

Digitized by Google

appeased by De Viosmenil's promise to stand centinel at his door, and send her by her servants hourly intelligence of his health. De Viosmenil promised, but was much shocked to observe, that she thought more of his sufferings than of her own. This excluded all hope; when our sufferings are derived from others, we know not when they will end.

De Courcy was better, better every hour; for Montgomery no longer opposed his intention of returning to Ireland. De Viosmenil knew nothing of this, and hoped that she would be appeased by the intelligence of his recovery; but as her fears for his safety diminished, other fears arose, and, with agonizing importunity, she besought him, if possible, to see De Courcy, to hear from his own lips what she had to *fear* or to *hope*, (she laid much emphasis on the first word, and uttered the last scarce audibly). —She implored but to hear her fate, and

Digitized by Google

still she could not resign the thought that De Courcy could not pronounce her fate.

De Viesmenil promised to bear faithfully this simple message, and swore to bring a direct and conclusive answer. Then when the words "a direct and conclusive answer" thrilled in her ears, she wished to delay what she might precipitate, but could not avert—then she tried to add the interest of passion and eloquence to her message—she felt too much could not be said in this last appeal; but when De Viosmenil, with the patience of French politeness, and the zeal of anxious friendship, repeated over her long, long address word for word, those very words that came burning from her very heart a few moments past, appeared to her, from the lips of another, so cold that she felt it impossible they could touch De Courcy, and burst into tears. She made a thousand alterations and additions, till her meaning became obscure and confused even to

Digitized by Google

herself; and she, at length, suffered De Viosmenil to depart, with the feeling which always accompanies our reposing our last concerns with another,—a feeling that they cannot act for us as if they were ourselves, and a consciousness that if we acted for ourselves, the event would be equally hopeless.

He went—returned. These lingerings of misery, this protracted distillation of wretchedness, when we watch it drop by drop, see every one gathering, and have time to count it before it falls, and almost measure the period of descent, is like the punishment described in Moore's poetry, where the criminal is placed beneath the

> "Drippings of the gory dew,
> From the corse of him he slew."

Zaira suffered all this. De Viosmenil's answer could not mitigate it; he could not see De Courcy; but he *could* see servants

Digitized by Google

busy, trunks packing—all the "fearful note of preparation" announcing a journey. Then Zaira thought of employing Madame St Maur as her intercessor, for she had sunk to the hope of intercession. Madame St Maur dreaded the office, for she feared that her feelings for her friend would operate against her interests, or rather her hopes. She went, however; insisted on seeing De Courcy, *succeeded in seeing him*, and the result has been already told in language which we can never hope to equal.

Zaira, who remembered the influence which the animation, the naivete, and the exhaustless spirits of Madame St Maur had obtained over De Courcy, implored her to exert it in her behalf.

——————— "Misera hoc tamen unum
Exequere anna, mihi, solam nam perfidus ille
Te colere, arcanos etiam tibi credere sensus—
Sola viri molles at aditus et tempora noras."

VIRGIL.

Digitized by Google

The rest may be best told in the same exquisite language.

> "Talibus orabat, talesque miserrima fletus
> Fertque refertque soror, sed nullis ille movetur
> Fletibus."—VIRGIL.

Then all was over. Zaira herself had hope no longer—she now found employment in watching, by her servants, every movement at De Courcy's—sometimes she appeared happy when she heard there were no immediate preparations for a journey; oftener, when she saw from their countenances what she was to hear, she shrunk from the sight, and motioned them from the room, without listening to what they had to say.

One day the person, from whom they had bespoke attendants to accompany them when they were to quit Paris, came to en-

Digitized by Google

quire when she proposed to set out. Zaira was silent for some time; the person, imagining it was forgetfulness, repeated her former orders, and reminded her it was near the time when she and Mr De Courcy had proposed to leave Paris. "And so he will," said Zaira, "perhaps sooner."

She dismissed the person, who went away surprised at this change of her intentions. A party who were going to Italy, pressed her soon after to join them;—she shook her head. "Ah, you are indispensible," said one of them; "your genius will alike embellish life and antiquity."

"Not now, I fear," said Zaira. A day or two more elapsed, and *that* arrived which had been fixed on for her leaving Paris with De Courcy. Madame St Maur observed the increased gloomy agitation of Zaira that day, though she knew not the cause. "These continued blows of accident are what the heart is least able to bear.

Digitized by Google

When one great and overwhelming calamity is thus parcelled out into minute portions, and brought before our minds in distinct features, when not a trivial circumstance can occur without recalling what we were stubbornly struggling to forget,—not a moment can strike without sounding the knell of departed happiness; our resolution is in vain, and every step we take, the ground seems stuck with daggers.

One day she seemed unusually calm; De Viosmenil and Madame St Maur were happy and deceived; she entreated to be left alone at an early hour, and promised to compose herself to rest; they believed her. It is dangerous to leave persons suffering under an incureable calamity; like madmen, they have always the cunning to deceive their keepers. They left her. Zaira had heard that day that De Courcy intended to quit Paris on his way to Ireland, in

Digitized by Google

the evening; she resolved to make one last appeal, and to make it in person.

No mind could be worse disposed than De Courcy's at this moment to such an appeal. He had to contend with the morbid feelings of a broken constitution, broken by premature excitement,—the remorse of a conscience wounded in youth, when the wound is incurable,—and the loathings of unspeakable horror at the thought of her to whom he was willing to ascribe the dying sufferings of Eva, that he might escape the burthen of them himself. Zaira's beauty now appeared like the effect of deliberate seduction,—her genius like a spell. Her great and good qualities were all undervalued—her simplicity of character, sweetness of temper, and genuine humility, (the humility inseparable from true genius;) the devotedness of heart with which she was attached to him, were all crimes in the eye of one who now could see nothing but

Digitized by Google

crimes in her conduct, to hide his sense of his own.

With all this fatal prepossession against her presence, against her very image, was combined a determination to leave France for Ireland,—a determination the stronger, because it had no distinct object, but merely a general hope of relief from the change of place. Montgomery, who urged this step, saw its inefficacy every moment; but he knew that a vehement resolution with weak minds stands in the place both of principles and feelings; it flatters them with an appearance of the energy they want, and they are satisfied with the flattery. So De Courcy was to set off for Ireland in a few moments; those few moments were all that remained to Zaira. As soon as De Viosmenil and Madame St Maur left her, she wrapped herself in a mantle and went to the hotel where De Courcy resided. He was out;—she sat down in his apartment.

Digitized by Google

Every thing around her announced his approaching departure;—that nightly preparation, at once tumultuous and silent;—the hurrying tread of domestics;—lights burning feebly, from the haste with which they were carried about;—trunks, packages heaped on the deranged furniture;—the desolate look of rooms which the possessor is about to quit;—she saw it all.

In a few minutes De Courcy arrived; he entered without knowing she was there; discovered her; started and turned away. She rose, attempted to follow him, but her cold and stiffening feet seemed nailed to the floor. He passed rapidly from room to room,—gave directions in a hasty voice, and recalled them again; at last, returning, he threw himself on a sofa at the opposite end of the room, folded his arms, and letting his head fall on his bosom, remained silent. The room was very dark, he could hardly see her muffled figure, but he could

Digitized by Google

hear her sobs, her choaked attempts to speak, and see her try to hold out her clasped hands to him in an agony of silent supplication. He bent his head still lower, and rooted his eyes on the ground. It would have been some consolation to the wretched Zaira to know he dared not look up; one glance, one word, might have overthrown his resolution. Suddenly a servant entered, and whispered him—he rose; Zaira rose too—she felt her hour was come—in a moment, in less than a moment, she felt him dart from his seat, felt him at her feet, felt him clasp her in a last, last embrace, (like that in which death is mingled with passion,) and rush from the room. Every object then swam before her; she neither saw or heard, but she knew his steps rapidly descending the stairs, knew when he touched the last, when he rushed through the passage, when the door opened—closed—then the thunder of the wheels, as they

Digitized by Google

bore him away, shook the pavement—She heard, and felt that if one word could have retained him, she could not utter it.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

——— Orbe resedit
Diriguitque malis.
OVID.

THE first hours of desertion by those we love, are hours of which, not even those who have felt them, can describe the misery. It is "the first dark day of nothingness;" moments pass on, and thoughts follow thoughts, like the waves of the sea under a midnight sky—neither shade, nor light—neither distinction, or pause. One gloomy level of unbroken darkness, moving, but not diversified—with the sufferer time is no more. They feel like the guilty in a future state, who, in the terrible description of the French preacher, are made

Digitized by Google

to ask each other in hell, What is the hour? and the answer is—Eternity! It is in this state that we look around, and wonder that things continue the same, when *we* are no longer so—that objects make the same impression on our senses, without leaving any on our minds—that the sun still shines, and we cannot see its light—that men continue to speak, to be employed about we know not what, for we have ceased to understand the language of life. We are surprised to feel the hands of friends press our's still, when we can no longer return the pressure. The world has past away from us; we live in a world of our own, a wild world of misery, dreams, and recollections. We are as if in the grave, but without the repose of the grave.

Madame St Maur and Vlosmenil now never quitted her for a moment, and these two amiable persons seemed to have consolidated their affection for each other into

Digitized by Google

one single sentiment of friendship for Zaira. In their hands she was quite passive—did every thing she was asked—felt nothing that was done for her. When they assisted her into a carriage, she suffered them to direct it where they pleased, without any observation. Sometimes when Madame St Maur remarked the beauty of the sky, or of the country, she wept. Nature had still a power over her heart—a power to give pain.

At home they always surrounded her with a select society; but she heard nothing, answered no one, without an effort painful to those who addressed her. She sat among them passive and abstracted. Sometimes, her natural sweetness struggling with her wretched situation, she felt she ought to appear sensible of the kindness, and tried to reward it with a smile; but there was a mixture of vacancy and ghastliness in it that terrified them.

At other times, when literature was dis-

Digitized by Google

cussed, after a vain effort to collect her ideas, she hurried out of the room,

> "Nor quite unconscious of her wretched plight,
> Gave one sad look, and hurried out of sight."
>
> BLOOMFIELD.

Even these struggles were soon to be terminated. One day they were driving through a village near Paris. Its inhabitants had been great sufferers in the late war; and Zaira, who heard of their distress on her arrival, had relieved it with munificence almost regal.

Shortly afterwards, in one of her excursions with De Courcy, she happened to pass through this village; the inhabitants recognised her, and rushed from their houses to load her with blessings, while the children (with the onction and theatrical feeling of French children) flung a profusion of flowers beneath the wheels of her carriage. De Courcy was delighted with this scene, which exalted his passion in his own eyes by

Digitized by Google

the virtues of its object. Zaira was affected, and she said to De Courcy, "I am jealous of the happiness these people give me; I would not wish to feel a moment's happiness but what I owe to you." She remembered the rapture with which De Courcy kissed her hands.

All this seemed to pass before her eyes, to pass through her heart, as she went through the village, without either applause or passion. Her benevolence was now forgotten; her heart was broken—

"There died the best of passions, Love and Fame."

In dreadful agony she sat back in the carriage, and signified, by her gestures, that they should get on as quick as possible. Her agitation that day suggested to Madame St Maur the expediency of removing her from Paris, where every object seemed calculated to revive what it was their unavailing struggle to make her

Digitized by Google

forget. De Viosmenil agreed with her, and they went to a villa of his about ten miles from Paris. Zaira made no opposition, she hardly understood their proposal, and acceded to it to avoid having it explained to her. They both agreed in hoping that this removal would be beneficial to her; they agreed also in peopling this retreat with all that taste, literature, and affection could supply; but they could not agree on the subject of De Courcy's precipitate desertion, and many and eager were their battles about it.

De Viosmenil, reasoning on the nature of man *in general*, derived it from the inconsistency of the human heart, which in De Courcy's case had been precipitated by a fastidious and satiated sensibility—a too early and dangerous acquaintance with the luxuries of the heart. Madame St Maur, arguing from the feelings of Frenchwomen, *in particular*, ascribed it all to the seductions of Eulalie de Touranges. "I saw it,

Digitized by Google

I saw it all—saw it from the first. I observed her the night she presumed to talk of Racine and Shakespeare—*She* talk of Racine and Shakespeare!—But her *mica* was just equal to ore with that silly Irishman. Do you know she had one day the confidence to say to me—Yes, Zaira has great talents—I have discovered them—*She discover Zaira's talents!* But what effrontery! it is just like the impudence of Horace Walpole,* who pretended to discover that Johnson had sense." Madame St Maur, it seems, understood English literature better than the human character—and that is a very singular praise for a Frenchwoman.

---

* *Vide* Walpole's Letter published in the first volume of the Miseries of Authors. By M. D'Israeli.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

—— tunc nec mens mihi, nec color
Certa sede manet—arguens
Quam lentis penitus macerer ignibus.

HORACE.

DE COURCY and Montgomery set out; they went by the way of Bourdeaux and Cork, for Montgomery, who was of age now, had some business to settle with his guardians there, and he was resolved that De Courcy should not quit him, or rather that he would not quit De Courcy till they were both safe in Ireland. He supported him on the journey by suggesting hopes that he hardly felt himself, that they might not be too late.

Digitized by Google

De Courcy's rapidly declining health struck him, and he began to tremble for both. It was August—lovely weather—just three months since De Courcy had quitted Ireland. When dates are connected with subjects of strong emotion, how accurately the memory retains the most trivial. During the voyage, it was De Courcy's constant habit to remain leaning over the deck till a late hour—dangerously late for him. When Montgomery could not dissuade him from this practice, he partook it with him. One night, after De Courcy had gazed long on the beauty of the calm moon, he exclaimed,—"She was so lovely!" (Montgomery hoped he was thinking of Eva,) "How often, on such a night as this, we have gazed on heaven together, till we felt that sublime inebriation which such a light infuses, when we taste it along with those we love!—How pure, how celestial was her eloquence then!

Digitized by Google

It is impossible to believe that her heart was not as pure as her sentiments.

> 'If the ill spirit have so fair an house,
> Good things will strive to dwell with it.' "

Montgomery bore all this with patience, (though he felt it could not relate to Eva;) he thought it the natural expression of inevitable regret, better indulged than suppressed. "Was she not very lovely?" said De Courcy, appealing even to Montgomery.

"She was," said Montgomery;" *but the Jews, when they saw the second Temple, wept.*"

No allusion was made even to Zaira's name during the rest of the voyage. Montgomery hoped he would have been detained in Cork but a short time by his business; but De Courcy's increasing ill health compelled him to continue there a considerable time, and when at length they set out, he

Digitized by Google

felt as if De Courcy was hastening to join Eva in the tomb. They arrived in Dublin about the middle of September. Many changes had taken place since De Courcy had quitted it. At first no one, not even in her own family, could observe the slightest alteration in Eva's health or habits. She looked pale indeed, paler than usual; but that caused them little surprise, and no concern, while they all saw her as active in her charitable visits, as earnest in her religious duties, as ready to every good word and work as she ever had been. The name of De Courcy never passed her lips, and it may be concluded it was never uttered by any of her friends.

Thus passed on a few, very few weeks; it was easy, then, for the quick eye of affection to mark a languor in her motions, a reluctance to conversation, which, however, alarmed no one but Mrs Wentworth. Then appeared rapidly "the many infallible

Digitized by Google

signs" that a mortal change is about to be wrought in the mortal tabernacle. They came in quick and alarming succession;—the failing appetite—failing—gone—the vegetables spread over the untasted meat to hide it from her watchful family—the plate conveyed away by a glance to the servant—the indifference to conversation declining gradually into an unconsciousness of what was said, till it was actual pain to give the simplest directions to the servants, or utter an answer to the plainest questions, on which she was compelled long to pause before she could discover their meaning—The mist that began to spread alike over the faces of visitors, friends, and family, till she scarce knew one from the other, and spoke to them almost at random,—the voices even of those she knew, sounding as if they came from a great distance, their sound failing, not increasing, as the sentences ended. The dreadful apathy with which she mingled in the religious ex-

Digitized by Google

ercises, struck herself. Other symptoms she would have regarded less, but they forced themselves on her. When she took up a book, she read page after page mechanically, without retaining a sentence; then she fixed her eye on the lines, and tried to force her attention in vain;—she read, her eyes only grew dim;—she closed the book and tried to examine her memory, but her memory retained nothing;—she attempted to excite herself by walking up and down the room, but this motion only increased the confusion of her head, and the objects she was accustomed to see every day, were now becoming every day more and more indistinct. Then came the shortened respiration;—sighs every moment were becoming necessary to enable her to draw her breath, till respiration itself became only a succession of sighs. Often she placed her hand on her heart, and wept from the pain with which she drew her breath.

Soon more distressing symptoms occur-

Digitized by Google

red, more perplexing, *for no one could guess the cause*, that being always the phrase when the sufferer is known to be dying of a broken heart. Physicians were then called in; Mrs Wentworth, with trembling affection, insisted on medical advice, and Wentworth, proud of his wealth, feed them liberally; of course it was easy to procure a variety of opinions. Weary of examining symptoms that could never lead them to the source of her complaint, they all luckily agreed in *change of air* for the patient. Change of air was to do wonders. They must go to the sea-side,—must go to Bray, the medical men said, for medical men always like to point out a place, as if there were a charm in a name.

Mrs Wentworth was gratified by the readiness with which Wentworth gave up his usual summer visit to Glassnevin, where he had had a villa ever since he had given up business. She prepared for their removal to Bray, and Wentworth, in the mean time,

Digitized by Google

went about among his evangelical friends, and many was the prayer-meeting at which he knelt, where teachers engaged in prayer at his request, for a female believer under the hidings of God's face, and sometimes for a female believer grievously buffeted by Satan. To Bray they went. Eva smiled passively. The physicians attended, found the sea air too keen for her, took more fees, and recommended Dundrum, mountain air, and goats whey. Mrs Wentworth's spirits revived with the prospect of a change of place; her spirits had nothing else to support them; she knew more than the physicians knew, but she echoed what they said, because she wished to believe it. Dundrum, mountain air, and goats whey were to work miracles. Wentworth, on his removal, enquired, "Was there an evangelical chapel in the neighbourhood?"—that was all.

Eva left Bray, with the addition of a slight cough to her former tendencies; but that was the consequence of the sea-air, (so

Digitized by Google

every one said,) and the mountain-air would soon remove it. This redoubtable mountain played for another month on Eva's gasping lungs, but the battery was ineffectual. Still every visitor said she was better; she must be better from such frequent change of place. Mrs Wentworth believed them in the credulity of despair—Wentworth believed them, because he thought hopes given were a kind of value received for his money, of which he was not sparing—the visitors believed, because people believe any thing improbable sooner than return without some news after visiting an invalid—Every one believed them but the patient—she had good reasons for mistrusting them, but she kept them to herself, or suffered them to be read only in her looks. It was a horrid thing to see her come into the breakfast-room every morning with those looks, and with that voice to say "she was better."

Towards the beginning of August, her principal physician was obliged to go to the

Digitized by Google

country. He took his leave with much kindness, urged attention to his prescriptions, and, shaking her hand with a gay expression of hope, desired her to be well when they met in winter. Eva smiled; Mrs Wentworth saw that smile, and, quitting the room, wept bitterly.

The work was going on—that hand, which no human hand can repel, was urging on the wheels of life with a rapidity irresistible, and no longer imperceptible. Mrs Wentworth trembled at the brilliant deepening colour, which every other eye hailed as the glow of health.—"Never saw Eva look so well before," said the visitors with one voice.

"I never saw her look *so* before," said Mrs Wentworth, with a deep sigh.

"Eva has now so far recovered her *looks*," said Mr Wentworth to his wife, "that I think we need no longer delay the mention that even her late awful backsliding has not entirely alienated our spiritually-minded friend Macowen. He is willing still to so-

Digitized by Google

cept of her as his wife, and to restore her steps to the way of peace; and the change of her looks"—

"Never mind her looks," said Mrs Wentworth, rather hastily for *her;* "wait till her health is better."

"Her health!" said Wentworth, in amaze; "sure she *ought* to be quite well—all the physicians say so. I am sure they have been paid regularly; and her colour, I never saw it so bright—without exercise, without food, for she never eats any thing, she comes from her room in the morning with a glow in her cheeks I never saw before."

"Nor I either," said Mrs Wentworth, with tears in her eyes.

"Then what objection, since her health is restored, to her being united to that *gifted* young man?"

"Mr Wentworth," said his wife, with an earnestness that made him start, "let me implore you—*implore you,* not to mention this subject to Eva for some time."

Digitized by Google

"For what time?" said Wentworth. "I am willing to wait a reasonable time; but she should be prepared, that I am resolved not to be made a fool of twice by a girl—I am resolved that she shall be united to him."

"She never will," said Mrs Wentworth, "to him or to any one;" and her tears gushed out, and almost choaked her voice, while she struggled to add, "she is dying!"

"Dying!" repeated Wentworth in amaze, not without a mixture of anger—"Then I consider myself very ill-used indeed; taking so many fees, going from place to place, and to die after all; I might have been told that at once. You know, Mrs Wentworth, *Eva is no relative of ours; we have no tie to her, and her conduct latterly has been productive of nothing but uneasiness to us both.*"

"*I thought that matter had been settled long ago,*" said Mrs Wentworth. "*The interest of her fortune has amply paid for*

Digitized by Google

her board and education, and the protection she has enjoyed under the name of your niece."

"Well—well," said Wentworth; "but, if you think she is dying, had we not better have a prayer-meeting, and get some spiritual man to wrestle with the Lord in her behalf?"

"Certainly, I think so. I do pray, I do lift up my heart to God for her; but it would be my wish that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous should also plead for her; and, till we know more of the mind of the Lord concerning her, let us talk no more of marriage."

Wentworth acceded with a readiness that astonished his wife. She looked up in his face to discover an ulterior meaning. He had turned away—a thought had occurred to him, that, on its first intrusion, he repelled with disdain—it came again, and was not treated so discourteously—again, and he began to parley with it.

Digitized by Google

Now, the thought was this; that if Eva died, it was highly improbable her fortune would ever be claimed at his hands, considering the mysterious manner in which both she and it had been entrusted, or rather thrust into them. "Now," said Wentworth, trying to misunderstand his own motives, "that would enlarge the sphere of my utility. I would double my subscriptions to the Bible Society, and the Missionary Society, and the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts—I will subscribe to the fund for purchasing livings in lay patronage for evangelical preachers; I will treble my donations at Bethesda Chapel—and when she dies, (*if* was already exchanged for *when* in his reasonings), I will maintain her school, and leave it an ample sum in my will."

This being settled, Wentworth set off for Dublin, to meet the trustees of a charitable institution. The physician who attended that day declared Eva much worse;

Digitized by Google

the all-powerful mountain-air had failed; and the goat's-whey was little better than it should be. The last medical attendant was all for air and variety; the present was all for warmth and repose. Her native air, the air of Dublin, was far better for her in the chill mornings of an Irish September, ushered in with a light frost, than the keen breeze of the mountains, whose spicula, this gentleman said, were only exacerbating her lungs. Back to her native air she must go, (*apropos* she was born in Munster, two hundred miles from Dublin,) and there warm rooms, early hours, the strictest precautions against cold, abstinence from animal food, and plentiful draughts of *Koumis*, were to do for her that—which no mortal medicine now could do. So back to her native air (as it was called) she went; and, to the surprise of all, in a few days she was visibly better.

The physician triumphed; Macowen exulted, (to himself,) but he could not look

Digitized by Google

at her now without "glittering with ungodly dew," and his red hair actually looking redder with joy. Even Mrs Wentworth was deceived, but Eva was not; she knew the cause, *it was a place of recollections.* Here they had met, loved, and parted; and had she been acquainted with the neglected poetry of Lee, she might have exclaimed,—

> "There's not a soul beneath,
> Who died (as I must die) for fatal love,
> That better knows the gloomy arbours there,
> Than I each chamber in this *house of death;*
> 'Twas here"——
>
> LEE'S *Mithridates.*

She saw him every where, she heard his voice, she saw him on the seat where he had last sat, remembered every board he had trod, and when the door was opened by any one, still felt (*a little more faintly every day,*) the delicious agitation of heart that announced his presence before she saw

Digitized by Google

him. It was when twilight came, that the indulgence of this visionary existence became most exquisite. She dwelt with him in her mind; held imaginary conversations; and heard, amid silence, the tones of that voice which, dying as she was, had not ceased to charm her. The state of her mind began to resemble that of the light, which flattered its morbid indulgence—clouded, but not obscured,—more solemn, picturesque, and full of imagery, than the brightness of day.

She yielded to this indulgence at first without resistance, not feeling the fatal effect it was producing on her remains of life. It was like the system of assassination formerly practised in Italy, when poison was conveyed in the most exquisite perfumes. Her religious feelings soon returned, and warned her away from such indulgence—it was suitable neither to her feelings, or her situation. She obeyed the summons—she felt it came from God—then she gave up

Digitized by Google

all thoughts, all feelings, and struggled to think of God alone. She struggled, but did not soon succeed. The apparent restoration of her health furnished her with an excuse for renewing her former habits; no one opposed her. Mrs Wentworth was happy, so was her husband; for, as the religious people were now coming to Dublin, he had ample employment in his way; two of the Bethesda people had lately joined Mr Kelly's congregation; some of Mr Kelly's had also joined another body of separatists, (after a vigorous pamphlet-controversy on baptism, which nobody read but themselves.) Mr Wentworth continued to repeat, "they went out from us, because they were not of us;" and Mr Kelly's followers repeated exactly the same text, to console themselves for the defection of their fallen brethren.

Eva's first attentions were paid to her school; she sat among them, and wondered that she no longer felt the same plea-

Digitized by Google

sure—she heard their lessons, that is, she held the book in her hands as long as she could, while her dim eye was ineffectually fixed on the page, where every line seemed doubled—she tried to superintend their work, but after giving directions, which she recalled again, without being able to correct them, and praises all at random, mistaking the names of those to whom she addressed them, she was compelled, faintly smiling, to resign her charge to some other. It was this touched her most—this little seminary of candidates for heaven had been her delight in happier hours; and she supplicated fervently, with many tears, that her health, or, at least, her intellects might be spared, till she saw some of them on whom her cares and prayers had been bestowed, "bring forth fruit unto everlasting life." *Formerly she had prayed for them, now she was compelled to pray for herself.* She was still able to

Digitized by Google

walk out; the air, the open air, was all that seemed to revive her; we cling to it eagerly when we feel we have not long to inhale it. At all events, it is a great matter for a sufferer to be enabled to encounter the enemy in the open air. We think ourselves better when we can thus mimic the habits of convalescence. She still went to Bethesda Chapel, though the ascent to Dorset-Street was trod with slower steps, and more painful respiration every day. She mixed, also, in the parties of her religious friends, where reading the Scriptures and praying formed the object of meeting; yet these were becoming less and less pleasant to her, for not even the serious habits of the females could altogether suppress their curiosity about De Courcy's leaving her, and her subsequent illness. One night, at one of these meetings, Macowen (her persecutor) was requested to give "a word of prayer." He complied; and whether he now despaired of his prey, or was will-

Digitized by Google

ing to display his precatory eloquence at her expence, the whole of his supplication was addressed to the Deity *through* her; he implored the mercy of Heaven for a wanderer who had strayed from the fold; for one "who had forsaken the guide of her youth, and forgotten the Covenant of her God; who had loved strangers, and after them would go." And as he went on, aided by the sympathising murmur of the audience, his memory supplying him with images, and his passions with eloquence, there was not a single metaphor in the Old Testament descriptive of the apostacy of the Jews from their God, that he did not apply to Eva, who, compelled to kneel out this martyrdom, wished to sink into the earth to escape it. This cruel holding her up as an object to a numerous circle, was the most painful trial she had yet experienced. Wentworth thought it excellent, and expressed much hope from the strivings of that godly man in her behalf.

Digitized by Google

Mrs Wentworth thought very differently; her feelings were so much outraged, she could hardly remain on her knees; and when her husband soon after proposed Macowen to be of a party that was to meet at their house, Mrs Wentworth strenuously declared, "He should not come into their city, nor *shoot an arrow* there." And Wentworth was not displeased with her opposition to his wishes, because it was couched in the language of Isaiah, whom Macowen had taught him to call the fifth evangelist.

Eva's resources were now contracting very rapidly. She no longer went out; she was becoming more reluctant to meet the evangelical parties at home—there were a number of females always—much whispering with Mrs Wentworth, who, in vain, tried to repel it. Her friends were kind, but still they were human beings; and curiosity is human too. She imagined every eye was bent on her since Macowen's

Digitized by Google

public appeal, and from every eye she now wished to shrink.

Music—that resource alike powerful in society and solitude—that had failed her; her voice no longer could be heard among the singers at Bethesda, it now could scarcely be heard across the narrow room. She often tried to sing the hymns she had been accustomed to lead in, and was astonished at her own deficiencies; for, as her vocal powers had never been the subject of her thought, this failure seemed to her like a failure of devotional sentiment. She was soon undeceived; the loss of her voice forced itself on her, as little as she had once regarded it; and she was now obliged to murmur those praises which once she uttered in tones that might have been accompanied by the harps of cherubims. Her voice, broken, feeble, but exquisitely toned, appeared rather like melodious respiration than music; it seemed as if she was collecting its decli-

Digitized by Google

ning powers to join that choir, of whose harmony there shall be no interruption and no end.

Society, (such society as she was accustomed to)—Music, (the music she loved,) were thus lost to her. Reading became her only resource; Wentworth's loaded shelves promised exhaustless materials for religious study; but the works of man interested her no longer, her attention failed in following them; she had a mistrust, a fear of delusion, of uncertainty; and all her faculties, withdrawn from human teachers, reposed in confidence on the word of God alone. Wentworth saw the Bible in her hands every day, and sometimes wondered she was so long in reading the *lessons of the day*. He called it formality; she felt it was not: he pressed on her some popular works of divinity; she clung to her Bible. With delight beyond expression, she felt that her faculties, that were growing so cold and obtuse, kindled as she read the sacred

Digitized by Google

writings — she understood, felt, lived at every line—weakness was suspended, and death itself seemed to pause, and spare the moments that were devoted to eternity; but, like a relentless creditor, it put all to the account, and exacted it to the uttermost farthing. The Bible was her constant study—feebly she turned over the pages of human writers—closed them;—opened the pages of inspiration—all was light—it was the word of God—no error—no dream. The words of man might deceive—*had* deceived her;—the word of God could not. She knelt, and read the precious pages on her knees as long as she was able to kneel. Inestimable volume! that reveals, amid all the vicissitudes of life, the only two certainties known to man—*grief* and *futurity*. What sufferer can read it, and not feel his sufferings anticipated by that sorrow that passeth all sorrow? Every thing in the sacred books either instructs or consoles the sufferer; but all prepares

Digitized by Google

for suffering. This is the truest lesson of life—That "man was made to mourn," is not merely the sentiment of a poet, proud of sentimental melancholy—it is the experience, the daily terrible experience of life. Even He who knew life best, proclaimed its awful universal character, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden;" and in this invitation did he not include the whole of the human race, for who is there that does not labour—that is not heavy laden? But the Bible reconciles us to suffering, by shewing not only that it is the path all must tread, but the path the best have trod—a path consecrated by the steps, the tears, and the blood of those to whom humanity looks up for solace and for elevation. Patriarchs and prophets, saints and martyrs, and Him whose name must not be named in a page so light, they were all destitute, afflicted, and tormented, and shall we repine?

Digitized by Google

This was the question Eva asked her heart, and the answer spoke peace to it.

She had also those outward mitigations of her sufferings which the mild and lingering nature of her mortal disease did not yet withhold from her. She made copious extracts from the Scriptures, and this employed a great part of her time. They were written with tolerable steadiness for a hand trembling with emotion, and weakened by approaching death; there was only one passage that betrayed a failing hand—a tremor of the heart. "It was not an open enemy that did me this dishonour; for then I could have borne it; neither was it mine adversary that did magnify himself against me, for then, peradventure, I would have hid myself from him; but it was thou"—— Here the extract was broken off.

The weather was unusually fine, though it was September, and the evenings mild and beautiful. Eva passed them almost entirely in the garden. She had always

Digitized by Google

loved the fading light, and delicious tints of an evening sky, and now they were endeared by that which endears even indifferent things—an internal consciousness that we have not long to behold them. Mrs Wentworth remonstrated against this indulgence, and mentioned it to the physician; but he "answered neglectingly;" said, any thing that amused her mind could do her no harm, &c. Then Mrs Wentworth began to feel there was no hope; and Eva was suffered to muse life away unmolested. To the garden every evening she went, and brought her library with her; it consisted of but three books—the Bible, Young's Night Thoughts, and Blair's Grave. One evening the unusual beauty of the sky made her involuntarily drop her book. She gazed upward, and felt as if a book was open in heaven, where all the lovely and varying phenomena presented in living characters to her view the name of the Di-

Digitized by Google

vinity. There was a solemn congeniality between her feelings of her own state and the view of the declining day—the parting light and the approaching darkness. The glow of the western heaven was still resplendent and glorious; a little above, the blending hues of orange and azure were softening into a mellow and indefinite light; and in the upper region of the air, a delicious blue darkness invited the eye to repose in luxurious dimness; one star alone shewed its trembling head,—another and another, like infant births of light; and in the dark east the half-moon, like a bark of pearl, came on through the deep still ocean of heaven.

Eva gazed on; some tears came to her eyes; they were a luxury. Suddenly she felt as if she were quite well; a glow like that of health pervaded her whole frame—one of those indescribable sensations that seem to assure us of safety, while, in fact,

Digitized by Google

they are announcing dissolution. She imagined herself suddenly restored to health and happiness. She saw De Courcy once more, as in their early hours of love, when his face was to her as if it had been the face of an angel; thought after thought came back on her heart like gleams of paradise. She trembled at the felicity that filled her whole soul; it was one of those fatal illusions, that disease, when it is connected with strong emotions of the mind, often flatters its victim with—that *mirage*, when the heart is a desert, which rises before the wanderer, to dazzle, to delude, and to destroy.

"It *is* an illusion," she exclaimed, "but I will enjoy it. It is the last, and God,—yes God, will forgive me this last human feeling: He will forgive my shedding this last human tear. This *city of shelter*, may I not fly to it for a moment? is it not a little one, and my soul shall live?"

Digitized by Google

A fairy landscape glowed in her heart for a moment; her withered youth, health, and passion bloomed again. It was that resurrection of the heart that we sometimes experience when we have long believed it dead. Eva glowed, trembled, wept once more, when she imagined no mortal object could draw another tear. Such gleams of soul sometimes brighten its twilight, even when the sun has gone down for ever and ever. Eva lingered on its rich and fading light; lost in a reverie too nearly resembling insanity, she did not hear a noise among the leaves of the arbour where she sat, (unconscious where she was,)—it increased,—she started,—the noise seemed like that of a person bursting the branches of the withered liburnum. It was not a *stranger* foot—she knew the tread, and was fixed to the spot—*it was—no—it could not be—it was*—for his wasting arms were twined around her the next moment; with all her

Digitized by Google

remaining strength she tore herself from his grasp. * * * *

De Courcy fell at her feet.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

By pain of heart, oft check'd and oft impell'd,
The intellectual power through words and things
Went sounding on, a dim and perilous way.

WORDSWORTH.

MADAME ST MAUR'S mother died about the time De Courcy quitted France, and no obstruction remained to her union with her lover; but these affectionate friends were too generous to be happy while Zaira was wretched. They forgot themselves, and seemed to live only for her. Their efforts were incessant, hopeless, and unavailing. They were not so absurd as to attempt consolation; they tried to open new channels for her mind in every direc-

Digitized by Google

tion, but the stream would flow no longer. Paintings, sculptures, books, every intellectual luxury were in vain exhibited at De Viosmenil's villa. Every thing intended to interest Zaira, seemed only to increase her sufferings, and her miserable smile was latterly becoming worse than tears. When strong intellectual powers are combined with grief, the union is fatal. The shallow superficial characters of the world feel grief very lightly; their tears are as easily wiped as they are shed; to those who are accustomed to think deeply, grief is a fire that supplies its own fuel, and can continue to burn when all outward materials appear to be exhausted. Her friends had hoped that a recurrence to her former intellectual habits might have interested Zaira; they were mistaken. Her former habits appeared to her like crimes, for they all came armed with reproaches; what ceases to please us, appears to condemn us for our lost sense of their charms;

Digitized by Google

and thus the wretched seem to themselves like the guilty, for they suffer almost the same pains, and dare not upbraid their accusers.

Zaira tried her former resources; she weighed them in the balance, and found them wanting, as all in their hour of calamity must feel them. Books, paintings, music; she tried them all—tried them with the remains of her former powers, but with no remains of her former enjoyment. The terrible, heart-annihilating thought; the *cui bono* apathy of soul that we feel when the god of our earthly idolatry has quitted the shrine, rushed on her whenever she attempted to read, to think, to feel, to sing, or even to look on nature. These former friends of her heart seemed all turned against her; she could not approach one of them, without feeling that they exclaimed, as with a living voice, "to what purpose do you cultivate us *now*?" She had no answer; she had once clasped them to

Digitized by Google

her heart, and cherished them there, and now they seemed to return her embrace with the stab of a smiling, beautiful, murderous *Arpega*. She shrunk away from their clasp, but the "iron had entered into her soul."

Conversation then became her only resource. The Scavans who frequented De Viosmenil's charming villa were eager to avail themselves of the distinction which her joining in their society gave it;—she gave it, but could not enjoy it. She mixed in society from an union of apathy and despair not unusual; a state of mind in which society may be a burthen, but solitude would be madness. She could no longer either communicate or receive; but she could bear the most frivolous sentiments better than her own thoughts. She could laugh with a facility that deceived those who had no penetration, but could not now shed a tear. Thus our misanthropy in-

Digitized by Google

creases in proportion with our inability to be alone; and our dependence on society is never so great as when we thoroughly despise it.

Among the company that crowded to De Viosmenil's villa, the most constant was M. De Cardonneau, of whom already honourable mention has been made as an atheist, a wretch who had no more heart than creed—no more sensibility than principle. But he was a Scavan, was well received in society, had imposing manners, and a fluency on habitual topics; he was a Macowen under a different dispensation, that was all. This man had been attached to Zaira for years, as a Frenchman is usually attached, with all the powers, not of his heart, or soul, or mind, but of his vanity, to which he would have sacrificed all mankind, if he could. In the hour of Zaira's eminence and prosperity he was proud to be admitted into her society; and magnified his consequence by repeating her conversation to men, and

Digitized by Google

her costume to women, who were not honoured by a nearer approach.

When he heard of Zaira's misfortunes, his mind changed. He could not, like Leonora Di Galigai, pretend to exercise the power of a strong mind over a weak one; but he knew that every mind is enfeebled by suffering. He *imagined*, too, that the natural excitability of the human heart might prepare hers for a new impression, while it was yet warm from the painful process of the former being effaced; but, above all, he founded his hopes on her sufferings; he knew (or, at least, he believed,) she had no religion to oppose to those sufferings, and on this he built his hopes. He conceived, that if her principles were destroyed, he might obtain influence over her intellects, if not over her feelings. Perhaps he wished to succeed, from the natural anxiety of infidelity to make proselytes. *Those who feel they are walking in darkness are glad of a companion.*

Digitized by Google

He had too much sense to commence the attack in the vulgar blasphemies of Paine, by calling Christ an impostor, and the apostles liars; he tried to lead her into the wild labyrinth of metaphysics, and had little doubt of her losing herself, if he could once get her there. One evening, as she, De Viosmenil, and Cardonneau, were walking, the beauty of the stars, emerging in sparkling succession in the deep blue heaven, drew the eyes and thoughts of the party upwards. They were silent; and De Viosmenil was pleased to observe the tranquillity of her expression.

"It is impossible," said Zaira, "to look on those bright mansions, and not conceive them the abodes of bliss. 'Who dwell happy there?'"

"None, probably, happier than the inhabitants of this planet," said Cardonneau; "and if their lot resembles ours, they have no reason to complain of being incumbered with too much felicity. It is not probable

Digitized by Google

that all the sufferers in creation are crowded into this planet, that earth is the dungeon of the vast fabric of the universe. Evil probably is every where—probably it preponderates every where—I argue from analogy"—

"And I from grief," said Zaira, "that forces us to look for relief to any place but that where we are condemned to feel it."

"Grief," said Cardonneau, "reproduces itself by its own fertility. Grief, driven to extremity, becomes the parent of hope,—hope produces delusion, and delusion brings us back to grief again."

At these words, De Viosmenil, who saw Zaira silently wipe away a tear, called on them both to observe a beautiful meteor, and tried to engage Zaira by a description of a meteoric stone that had lately fallen in the neighbourhood. She tried to listen to him, but Cardonneau, who, like most other atheists, was very cowardly, retired into the house, dreading, perhaps, a similar explo-

Digitized by Google

sion, and not coveting the fate of Pliny. De Viosmenil smiled, and repeated to himself, "Parcus Deorum cultor et infrequens, insanientis dum sapientiæ consultus erro, *nunc*—namque Diespiter igni corusco nubila dividens plerumque, per purum tonantes egit equos, volucremque currum."

There was a numerous company in the saloon. Zaira went to a window, drew aside the curtain, and sat alone gazing on the glorious night. Cardonneau approached softly; she did not perceive him; he overheard her repeating to herself, "God is love." He retreated—"If she is quoting from the Bible," thought the tempter, "this is no time for me."

A few moments after, when he hoped the religious effervescence had subsided, he ventured to approach again—"You no longer find society interesting," said he; "those men cannot any longer amuse you," pointing to a groupe of literary men who were conversing.

Digitized by Google

"Il n'y a point *d'homme* pour celle qui aime," said Zaira; "son amant est plus, tous les autres sont moins."

He was rejoiced to hear her quote from Rousseau, and congratulated himself that half the work was done. "You are fond of gazing on the night," said he; "so am I. This lovely light is congenial to grief, the only permanent inmate of the human heart."

"It is congenial to a feeling more sublime and salutary," said Zaira—"to the hope of futurity. There is no sophistry in the stars; those hieroglyphics, those sacred letters, traced by the finger of God, disclose more of his mind to man, than he can learn from the wisest of his fellow-mortals. I look there, and forget all you have said."

"I shall take care to refresh your memory, however," said Cardonneau to himself. "I have only said," he added, "what the stars, if they speak truth, can never contradict; to gaze on the phenomena of na-

Digitized by Google

ture for a consolation of grief is harmless; for grief is '*high-fantastical*;' and whether it derives relief from the charms of nature or of society, is little matter, provided relief be obtained; but to apply to those phenomena for a solution of the evils of life, and imagine, because the stars are bright, that their inhabitants are happy, is a wandering of intellect."

"Malo cum Platone errare," said Zaira, forcing a smile; "if my philosophy be false, it is at least more comfortable than yours."

"I congratulate you on its comforts," said Cardonneau, drily.

"And do you believe, then, I should feel happier, if I believed, like you, the universal predominance of evil?" said Zaira.

"If truth be an approach to happiness, you certainly would."

"Lead me then to happiness your own way, if it must be," said Zaira, with a melancholy smile. "The general predominance

Digitized by Google

of evil cannot be disputed; pain ushers us into life, pain attends us through it, and pain at length opens for us the gates of the grave: but it is often rendered supportable (nay enviable) by mental energy; and physical evil may thus even be productive of moral good."

"Physical and moral evil are separated only in the dreams of theory," said Cardonneau. "They are closely allied in the experience of life; severe bodily sufferings often produce the fiercest exacerbations of mind; want makes men murderers and robbers. I would not give much for the morality of famine. Ugolino would have cut my throat to give his children a meal. When Louis XIV. laid waste the Palatinate, or his Irish general (worthy of his master) drove all the population of the adjacent country under the walls of Londonderry, to starve in the sight of their countrymen, who could not assist them, don't you imagine that many of the sufferers were driven

Digitized by Google

to all the extremities of rage, blasphemy, and despair, who might have been very moral men, but for their physical sufferings? Do you conceive that they sat down, naked and famishing among snows, to console themselves with the thought of the moral good to be deduced from their circumstances?"

"To state extreme cases as *examples* may be admissible," said Zaira; "but it can scarcely be so to adduce them as general principles in argument."

"They are not extreme cases," said Cardonneau; "those wretches whom we call kings, intoxicated by the power of diffusing misery, (which man always mistakes for real power) have always rendered such cases rather common than extreme. Look at history—what is it but a loathsome and wearying repetition of one man, or community of men, wresting the rod of power from the hands of another to convert it into a scourge for the weak?"

Digitized by Google

Cardonneau was proceeding to examples, for he piqued himself on his powers of declamation, and certainly there was an ample field for them here; but Zaira interrupted him.

"Crime and evil are generally public, both from their nature and their consequences," said she; "but the very modesty of virtue prevents its notoriety. There is something very dramatic in evil; we dwell long on the description of a storm or a pestilence; but who can fill his imagination with the idea of days without a cloud, or write a diary of health that knows no interruption? Volumes have been filled with the details of human misery; but who ever wrote a book to tell mankind he was happy? Happiness is a single, perhaps an incommunicable sentiment; but grief is inexhaustibly fertile and eloquent."

"The very circumstance of the greater abundance of the details of calamity should

Digitized by Google

prove its greater quantum in life," said Cardonneau.

"Perhaps not," replied Zaira; "grief, compelled to look abroad for consolation or compassion, must try to procure them by a description of its sufferings; while happiness requires only consciousness, and stands in no need of witnesses. Were we to form the true estimate of life, it should be taken from man, not as he is represented in history, where all his worst feelings are brought into action, but as he exists in domestic life, where his best are generated and cultivated."

"I fear," said Cardonneau, "if we had the power, like le Diable Boiteux, to take off the roof of every man's house and look in, we should find ample confirmation of the predominance of evil. Man, in the struggles of public life, may be criminal, but is rarely contemptible—his vices, like the stage on which they are exhibited, are *great*—but in domestic life the sufferings

Digitized by Google

are wholly without grandeur, and our disgust at meanness is only added to our horror of depravity. Could we look into the cottage of the peasant with as much facility as their conspicuous station enables us to view the palaces of princes, we should find the same intrigue, vanity, envy, and selfishness struggling for interest and for power in the narrowest circle of domestic life, as ever was read of in courts and cabinets—and the history of the humblest individual for a single day, including the petty subjects of domestic strife—the eager pursuits of forbidden indulgence—the vain attempts of the aged to maintain power over rebellious youth—and the fierce struggles of premature manhood for early emancipation—the plots of brothers and sisters to obtain an exclusive share of parental partiality—or the dangerous and wicked preference of a parent for one child, perhaps the most worthless of all—the wars and rumours of wars, in one single day, un-

Digitized by Google

der one roof, ay, in one room—if we could see it—would leave us little reason to suppose that evil was confined to the greater events and more prominent characters of life.—Perhaps," said he, pursuing the point with increasing eagerness from its anticipated effect on Zaira's peculiar feelings—"perhaps if any part of life might be supposed more free from the predominant influence of evil than another, it would be that of the liberal and cultivated man of letters."—(Zaira sighed, and the atheist caught a good omen from her sigh; he determined, however, to sketch the portrait at a safe distance, and leave it to her contemplation.)—"*A man*," he continued, "who has studied books and nature; who has learned from historical examples to correct or avoid the evils of life; and who, while he is laying up stores of moral wisdom for the regulation of his conduct, is also led by the very habit of study into a course of rational and elegant enjoyment—

Digitized by Google

or, if such a case be too rare, let us imagine *a man*, (he was on his guard,) devoted to some beautiful art, that occupies his heart, his hands, and his time—whose life is passed in vicissitudes of pleasing toil, or of public triumph—in whose favour the curse pronounced on mankind seems to be reversed—whose devotion to his darling employment enables him to eat his bread, not in the sweat of his brow, but with almost as much pleasure, from the bare labour of his hands, as its consummation gives to the delighted spectator.—Well, may not such men be happy? may they not set life at defiance? may they not at least contrive to cheat it of a smile? the wisest and rarest art ever practised. Let facts speak. Facts proclaim loudly, too loudly, to leave an excuse to the wilful deafness of human pride, or human negligence, that philosophers, and poets, and artists are universally known to be the most irritable, restless, and jealous of mankind; and while their works breathe

Digitized by Google

the most exalted sentiments, and the most enchanting descriptions, and furnish the most exquisite representations of nature, physical or impassioned; and while the reader, or *spectator*, imagines, that the being who could write or feel, or even *paint* thus, must be half in Heaven,—that being is an utter stranger to the delights he can communicate so copiously and so richly, and sits in his study or school, stung by neglect, if unnoticed; mad with vanity, if popular; tremblingly dependent on, and meanly canvassing for the praise he affects to despise; and frantic with rage or with envy against the competitors, whom he damns with faint praise, or writhing with bitterer agony, pretends to disdain."——

"All intellectual persons," said Zaira, collecting her broken voice, and forcing herself to continue the debate from the mere *orphaned* feeling of misery, from a determination to support this "bald disjointed talk," lest the improvident kindness of

Digitized by Google

friends might haply touch another, a feeling like that of the Countess of Rousillon, when she said to her clown,—'Well, sir, for want of other foolery, I'll bide your proof.' All intellectual persons are not thus degraded; I have appeared in public, and my success never was attended by one pang of jealousy."

"Because you were superior to it," said Cardonneau, "not only from the eminent *distinction* of your talents, but from your goodness of heart."

That was the worst point of his argument. Zaira shuddered at a compliment now;—any thing that reminds us of our former existence, when the *spring* and the hope of it are lost, appears like a mixture of insult and reproach. Cardonneau felt in a moment he was on a wrong tack, and shifted with instantaneous and admirable dexterity. "We must allow," said he, (*il faut avouer*, the language a Frenchman uses

Digitized by Google

when, by dint of idiom, he is passing his own assertions for general truths,)—"We must allow that human expectations should be reduced to a very low standard indeed; but can our expectations be ever brought so low as reality brings them? Let us rate the estimate of life as low as we can bring it, health, peace, and competence at least must be items in the sum—to enjoy peace and comfort in any reasonable degree, or indeed in any degree at all, (and that is no very high demand,) we must certainly be exempt from all fear of wanting food for the day, and shelter for the night. Compared to this distress, all intellectual agitation is a farce, and all impassioned feeling a fever. But is this exemption enjoyed by ten out of twenty? No, not perhaps by five; no, (taking the ordinary vicissitudes of life into account) not *by one*. What multitudes are there whose sole occupation is to labour every day for the bread that must be every day consumed, and even on this hard con-

Digitized by Google

dition, how many are there who cannot obtain it? What multitudes are there who cannot procure at the doors of their own houses a share of the alms which they distributed with their own hands to mendicants but a short space before? But granting even, (what experience forbids us to grant) that competence includes the whole of life, is man then reduced to place his happiness in living a life like that of the beasts that perish, satisfied with daily food and nightly shelter? That man cannot have the heart of man who can crawl through life without a single tie of nature or of passion, —without any thing to love beside himself, —who can crouch into his hovel and munch his sordid morsel in brutal silence, satisfied that he has enough to protract his worthless existence while the many perish."

"Such a picture is horrid," said Zaira; "but" (and her voice trembled as she continued the sentence) "has nature no ties?

Digitized by Google

Has passion no charms? May not many sufferings be diminished or forgotten *if we love much?*"

"And if we do," said Cardonneau, eager to catch his victim in her own snare, "on how frail a foundation is even this palliative of misery placed? If the object is human, it must be transient."

Tears fell fast from Zaira's eyes at these words; and Cardonneau, whose object and hope were to make her not feel, hastened on to generalities. "Disease may corrode, age must decay it, death must remove it; and even while the objects we love remain with us, they may be so changed by the changes of life,—so altered by absence,—so withered by misfortune,—so parched and blasted by those winds that are for ever traversing the deserts of life, that we may find them likely to contribute to any thing but our happiness.—No, they are spared only to make us feel them drop, grain by grain,

Digitized by Google

from our agonizing hands, and to learn it is only sand we have grasped after all."

There was a long pause, till Zaira, collecting rather her feelings than her powers of reasoning, said,—"What is your object in thus pressing on the mind the predominance of evil, as if it were a salvatory clause in the creed of humanity? What interest can any human being have in disclosing to another views that must blast the sight? Revelation has assured us that 'God is love;' and this single sentence, if we believe it, furnishes a refutation of all your arguments, or a consolation."

"Revelation," said Cardonneau, who was a very well-bred atheist, "is doubtless entitled to profound respect; but we may be pardoned, if we refuse to surrender to that respect the evidences of our senses, the suggestions of our reason, the experience of our lives. We are told that 'God is love;' but we must look abroad for the proof,

Digitized by Google

which must be sought in his works. In the creation of that Being who is *love*, we find nothing but hatred and hostility; the circumstances of man both physical and moral; his nature as a savage, or his habits when civilized; the passions of his heart, or the institutions of society; the very elements themselves; the earth on which he treads convulsed by storms; the air that he breathes impregnated by pestilence—all seem sworn against the happiness of man; and if he obtains a short respite from these, his fellow-creatures are perpetual instruments of perpetually-recurring wretchedness; or place him alone, the very abstraction from struggle and difficulty, the very lassitude which that abstraction generates, is the most horrible sensation of all. Man becomes his own enemy then, his inanity is the worst of agonies, and, like the scorpion, he darts into himself that sting, which has no longer an enemy to pierce, and perishes by his own

Digitized by Google

poison. Amid such a world (his creation), where shall we recognize the 'God of love?' Is it not obvious, beautiful and intelligent Zaira, that if our creed, if our national *mythology*, intimated that an evil spirit had created the earth, and was permitted to amuse his malignity by the sufferings of its inhabitants, that we could expect no worse results than we daily witness or experience?"

"You make me shudder," said Zaira, rising hastily; "your expressions tremble on the verge of blasphemy."

"What is blasphemy?" said Cardonneau, rising also, and following her. "In ancient Athens or Rome, it would have been denying the divinity of Jupiter; in Constantinople, decrying the impostor Mahomet; in Madrid, speaking against the power of the Inquisition; or in Widah, that of the Great Serpent."

Cardonneau was glad to take shelter for

Digitized by Google

the time in these bewildering generalities, as the divers in the gulph of Ormus, when they see fish approaching to devour them, try to escape by raising the mud with their feet.

The next day Cardonneau was laid up with a severe toothach. De Viosmenil sat in his room for nearly an hour, during which time the conversation ran in its usual channel; Cardonneau talking the whole time like an atheist, or, in his own phrase, *en philosophe.*

At last, De Viosmenil, weary of him and his subject, rose to depart.

"Ah, stay!" said Cardonneau, announcing in the same breath defiance of God and dependence on man—"Stay a little longer; I am in horrible pain; stay, and if philosophy displeases you, I will talk *tres religieusement.*"

De Viosmenil was not tempted to stay, even by this promise.

Digitized by Google

The next day the toothach had ceased, and Cardonneau was able to talk blasphemy as well as ever.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

Of good and evil much they argued then;
Of happiness and final misery,
Passion and apathy, and glory and shame—
Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy.

MILTON.

ZAIRA was in no mood to hear him. She had felt deeply her deficiency in the argument the preceding evening, and was anxious to supply it, before she was again called on to controversy. In grief, the mind is very apt to blame itself; it acquires a species of irritability, which it is disposed to vent even at its own expense—a kind of suicidal hostility. We imagine we cannot too much punish the heart that has cost us so much.

Digitized by Google

Zaira now blamed herself for not having studied the evidences of revealed religion in her happier hours, though she felt that those hours presented little motive for such studies. Idolized and flattered then, she was contented with a general admission of abstract truths, and even gave herself much credit for thinking so well of the other world, while the present was full of charms and honours—it was a kind of fair-weather religion, fit for the happy—but now that the storm came on, she was forced to look to the tackle of the threatened vessel, and see whether it was fit to ride out the gale. Grief certainly leads more to think of religion than joy does. Singular phenomenon of the human mind! One would imagine that the effusion of gratitude was as natural as the supplication for support: It is not so however, for the reading-desks in our churches are loaded with requests to pray for the sick, and there is scarcely ever an acknowledgment of gratitude from the

Digitized by Google

convalescent, though there is an appropriate form for each. As in the days of Christ, of the nine cleansed, only one returns to give glory. Thus, joy leads us to communion with man, who can share it; and grief to communion with God, who alone can relieve it.—Which is best?

Zaira betook herself to study the evidences of religion with a kind of satisfaction derived from the feeling that it was *her duty*. Oh how soon, when unhappy, we fly to *duties* as a kind of atonement; how closely are the ideas of suffering and guilt connected in all human minds!

Zaira was unfortunate in undertaking this study in France, where there is a "plentiful scarcity" of such works. She enquired in vain for Stillingfleet's "Origines Sacræ," for Leland's "Account of Deistical Writers," for Browne's "Answer to Shaftesbury," for the masterly work of Paley on the "Evidences of Christianity," and that of her living countryman, Murray,

Digitized by Google

(one of the best of them all). No such books could be had—nothing but Chateaubriant, and his "Genie du Christianisme," (so called) a frivolous, superficial, gaudy, *French* work, reminding us perpetually of the necessity of condoling with the angels, who, we are told by Shakespeare, weep when men "play such fantastic tricks before high Heaven." What could Zaira make of a writer who substitutes for a proof of the Trinity an illusion drawn from the *threefold appearance of the sun, at his rising, meridian, and setting?* She toiled on through floods of eloquent nonsense; and *les femmes Scavantes*, who visited at Viosmenil's villa, looked over her shoulder as she read, exclaimed, "Monsieur Chateaubriant! Ah qu'il est charmant!" and tried to apply to the author of "Genie du Christianisme" the pun of a Frenchwoman on the title of Montesquieu's work, who said, "*L'Esprit des loix*," should have been "*Esprit sur les loix*."

All this did Zaira no good; she was

Digitized by Google

wearied to death by Monsieur Chateaubriant; there was no standing his

> "Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,
> Dried butterflies, and *tomes* of casuistry."
>
> POPE.

When under the power of strong emotion, nothing but *truth* can satisfy the soul. When the unhappy Dodd was going to execution, he exclaimed, "All will be *real* in a few moments!" We pant for this reality in grief, for we feel that half our sufferings have been owing to illusion. Zaira began to wish to hear the worst that could be said on the other side—dangerous curiosity! Like Pilate, she could have asked, "What is truth?" a question to which no answer was returned, doubtless because it was asked in presumption or impatience. This restlessness, however, was owing to her sufferings.

When our minds are at peace; when we are at ease in our possessions; when we

Digitized by Google

are "settled on our lees," we are disposed to be very well satisfied with the present state of things—the national religion and the church as by law established, all included—and we are ready to raise an outcry against those who seek to disturb us. But misfortune forces us to dig to the foundations, and we toil hard, and dive deep, if we may indeed find a drop of water to cool the flames that are devouring our very souls.

The next time they conversed, Cardonneau was more on his guard. He remembered she had been shocked by some of his former expressions; he watched himself. "Peu a peu," said Cardonneau to himself, "if I can get her to confess that she is thoroughly miserable, it will be easy enough to lead her to throw the blame of it from herself on the Deity; and a Deity that has once come to be blamed is good for nothing ever after. Oh, if I can get her to that! then"——

Digitized by Google

"So spake the spirited sly snake;" and he began his next meditated attack more and more *en philosophe*; he spoke of Christianity as of something he wished well to, and was willing to treat with lenity. He spoke of it like one making the best of a bad cause, and wishing, *with all his sincere soul*, that it was a better one. "God defend me from my friends," says some intelligent Frenchman, "and I will take care of my enemies."

He began his circumvallations far and wide, like a skilful besieger; the garrison must have had supernatural sight to descry his approaches. He lamented the *prevalence of evil*, like one who was humanely lamenting human calamity, not metaphysically searching into its causes. Zaira, in the impatient agony of a wounded spirit, tried to call him back to the subject. He appeared to submit to her commands, executed an incomparable French shrug, and performed, with eloquent circumlocution and admira-

Digitized by Google

ble colloquial navigation, a kind of coasting voyage round and round the forbidden shore, without ever touching on one of its dangerous bearings. This would not do for Zaira; she went straight to the point, to the *origin* of evil, that tremendous rock, against which the human mind may lie beating till it becomes a wreck. Cardonneau appeared to listen with a kind of deferential reluctance, and confessed the subject beyond his comprehension.

"It has occurred to me," said Zaira, "when I have thought on the subject, that evil is owing to the necessary imperfection of created beings. Divinity alone is perfect; every created being may fall, how far depends on himself; and thus evil may be perpetually generated by what constitutes the essential difference between the Creator and the created, the want of absolute and infallible perfection on the part of the latter."

"That is plausible," said Cardonneau, with the air of a man who wishes to be

Digitized by Google

convinced, "but it cannot account for the predominance of evil in the creation—the end of the Deity in creation would be frustrated—It would reduce the whole system to a God, and a universe of demons—a monstrous and frightful hypothesis. Even your great English philosopher,* in his observations on Soame Jennings's foolish pamphlet, confesses, 'we can easily conceive how evil comes into the world, but we cannot so easily conceive why there is so much of it, or why there might not be less.' If you were introduced into the house of a man, remarkable for his placidity and philanthrophy, and who was perpetually announcing his wish to make his family happy, would you not be surprised at finding every head bent down, and every eye filled with tears, to hear on every side the wailings of wretchedness and discontent—

* Dr Johnson.

Digitized by Google

in *effect*, to witness as much misery as could be inflicted by a domestic tyrant, or suffered by his dependents?"

"Not if their sufferings arose from themselves," said Zaira. "The master of a family is not answerable for the *wilful* misconduct of his children and domestics."

"That is the disadvantage of arguing from metaphor," said Cardonneau; "the features in the resemblance are only incidental, no man is *created* a servant,—in the original they are essential, for *every man is born a sufferer*, physically or mentally, or both *perhaps—both certainly*."

Through this "war of words" Zaira fought her way, and she endeavoured to make it plain that nine-tenths of human sufferings are owing to the agent himself; and her heart supplied her with that terrible eloquence of experience, before which all eloquence is dumb or is weak.

"You are mocking human wretchedness," said Cardonneau, "when you speak

Digitized by Google

thus, when you describe the misery of man as arising from himself—does it not in a million of cases arise from circumstances over which man has no controul; from habit, from national institutions, from national religion, from power in unjust hands? Could the Helots be happy in Sparta?—Could Galileo be happy in the dungeons of the Inquisition?—Could Regulus be happy in his tub?—Could Latimer and Ridley and Hooper be happy when the fresh, green,* *slow-burning* wood was kindled round their shrinking, scorching limbs?"

He had gone too far; he was treading on hallowed ground—ground unfit for him to touch; he had not put off his mortal sandals when he ventured to approach it. Zaira seized the point with all the powers of her imagination.

---

* Vide Hume's History of England.

Digitized by Google

"Yes," said she, her beautiful face flushed for a moment, as if it reflected the flames in which the martyrs perished,—"Yes, they were happy—they suffered for the truth, and they went to God—Yes, they were happy—and their happiness, amid the most horrible extreme of physical suffering, disproves the argument that human misery depends on external causes."

Cardonneau felt his hopes sink within him at these words—they indicated religious feeling—he was aghast—a new enemy had started up—he knew not what to make of her; *Zaira*, declaiming in the tone of "Taylor and the Book of Martyrs!" Then, with rapid *French* penetration, he conceived all this was said *pour facon*, and he shifted directly. He appeared like a man who had listened merely to declamation, and was waiting to finish *his* sentence when the interruption was over.

"I was going," said he, with an air of patient deference, "I was going to men-

Digitized by Google

tion causes, barely physical, as productive of human misery—(there he thought he was safe)—climate, for instance. When Nature is armed against man, (as she is over three-fourths of the globe,) what defence can he make, and what consolation can he seek? No man can be an agent in being born in a particular climate; it can neither be matter of choice or of blame: yet how much of human happiness or misery depends on the degree of latitude in which we exist.*

Zaira, no longer able to rely on her imagination; on the unprompted facility of a happy mind, that pours out its conceptions and images with felicitous and unlaboured luxuriance, was now searching her memory for something to oppose to his argument. She felt it to be false, but had not spirit now to encounter it in the abstract; she tried to shelter herself under particular instances of opposition. She spoke of Iceland, a country that seems to have incurred

Digitized by Google

the wrath of all the elements; a country of fire and frost, the *Cain of inanimate nature*, branded and rejected and set apart from its species. "Yet in this country," said Zaira, "literature is cultivated to a degree unknown in the most delicious regions; and a woman is not suffered to marry till a priest furnishes a certificate of her being able to read, and being acquainted with the poetical histories of the island."

"A solitary instance is no argument," said Cardonneau; "I appeal to the general state of the universe; its physical circumstances are such as to exclude a majority of its inhabitants from the bare participation of comfort, (Cardonneau was obliged to naturalize an English word)—What is the state of the inhabitants of the Orkneys, of Lapland, of Siberia? Does not the mere climate under which they live condemn the natives to a state below that of intellectual beings,—to a state little above that of the animals whom they destroy for

Digitized by Google

the support of their miserable existence, or the uncouth furniture of their den-like huts?"—(And as he spoke, Cardonneau rapidly turned over a superb collection of engravings illustrative of the *costume* of the inhabitants of the north of Europe.) "Perhaps," said he, "the most miserable feature in the situation of these *Parias of humanity*, is that their bare representation furnishes a subject of wonder and curiosity to their more enlightened fellow-creatures; that we are gazing at them this moment as we would at the figures of animals in some wild remote country, and blessing ourselves that no such monsters are indigenous to our soil."

He went on in the triumph of his soul, and he spoke of the Boshiesmen, near the Cape of Good Hope, and of the Albinos, and of the men mentioned by Locke (in his Quixotic combat with the wind-mill giants of *innate ideas*), who had no name for a spiritual being, and can reckon no further than

Digitized by Google

their fingers, (offering their hairs as a substituted symbol for a number beyond five;) and he was still going on, when it occurred to him, (though a Frenchman,) that a woman must be allowed one moment to speak.

"All your positions," said Zaira, "tend to prove that misery is the lot of those who have not attained intellectual cultivation. If *lions could paint*," she continued, trying to exert her former pleasantry—she failed in the attempt. An internal monition,—a blow on the heart struck her at the moment,—she struggled with it,—struggled vainly, and burst into tears. Cardonneau was instantly and intently employed in *examining the engravings*. Zaira dried her tears, and went on with the conversation, "as well as she might."

"Do not imagine," said Cardonneau, "that I absurdly ascribe all the sufferings of man to the climate he lives under. He has more enemies than Nature. But where the tyranny of the elements ceases, that of

Digitized by Google

his fellow-men commences. A being who is enabled, by the progress of society, to construct a habitation that will defend him from their inclemency, to furnish it with what may contribute to his comforts, and to be within the reach of all that he may want, from being surrounded by other men and their habitations, is certainly a being of much less privations and physical suffering than the savage; but then he has sold his liberty for his indulgence. From that moment, he becomes liable to all the evils of society, viciously constituted;—he must fight in a cause that he is neither interested about, or conscientiously justified in, if his rulers please;—he must march to cut the throats of men he has never seen, at the command of one for whom he does not care;—he must submit to have his property drained by taxation, to support schemes which even those who devise them do not understand. And even supposing him exempt from the prescriptive evils of politi-

Digitized by Google

cally-constituted society, he must submit to all the *evils of opinion*, the false standard of morals and manners perpetually erected in society by those who take on them to be arbiters of its internal structure;—dissimulation must be his study, and hypocrisy his pride. He must for ever smile on those he hates, and often look coldly on those he loves; his joy must be art, and his very grief affectation. Is such a state more enviable than that of the savage? Or rather, does it not often combine the sufferings of savage life, hunger, cold, and nakedness, (for many have perished for want in civilized society,) with the evils of a sophisticated mind, artificial manners, and all the luxurious impotence of a vitiated debility?"

"The end of your commonwealth forgets the beginning," said Zaira, forcing a faint smile. "You began by proving the miseries of savage life, and you end by proving the superior wretchedness of civilized life."

Digitized by Google

"I have only supported my general argument," said Cardonneau, "by demonstrating the essential and predominant wretchedness of both."

"But," said Zaira, who saw the use he was going to make of this point when he had established it, "Is it fair to charge on the destiny of man those evils of which he himself is the author? Are not more than half the sufferings of life wilfully inflicted by man on himself? Is not disease owing to intemperance, and is not mental wretchedness the result of ungoverned passion?"

"Are the diseases of infants, which often continue to affect the constitution through life, the consequence of intemperance?" said Cardonneau; "and is not the cureless malady of a broken heart a suffering always inflicted by others, from whom we have perhaps deserved better?" Zaira, struggling with the feelings roused by this appeal, was unable to answer,—

Digitized by Google

"The tempter saw his time, the work he plied."

"We are born," said he, "with a constitution the prey of disease, and with a mind the victim of passions—Are we agents in either? We are not the cause of our own existence, though we are inevitable sufferers by the consequence." (He turned quickly, and with an air of *inconsequence*, to a book that lay on the table,—he had marked and doubled down the passage for the purpose that morning; it was Lord Valentia's Travels, and he turned to a strong description of a storm which the author witnessed in the East Indies;—darkness was over all the land for hours. The business of life was suspended—fear froze the soul of every man, prince and slave,—one person died of mere actual terror.) "This person," said Cardonneau, "was not a voluntary agent in his own sufferings and horrible death. He might have been a mild, benevolent, inoffensive being:

Digitized by Google

most probably he was; such persons are often constitutionally timid. Yet, can we imagine a death more hideous and dismal, on the rack, or at the stake, than a death caused by mere terror? Recollect also, that this feeling could not be powerful enough to cause his dissolution without having been the inmate of his heart and nature for years;—he must all his *life-long* have been in bondage to it;—he must have felt every day that 'fear which hath torment;'—he must for ever have been dependent on the "beggarly elements;"—whenever he rose in the morning he gazed on the atmosphere with anxious wretchedness, to know whether he was to pass the day in torture. Every passing cloud, every rising breeze, every whirl of dust was like the minister of death to his soul;—under this burthen of existence he lingered, writhed, and died. Can more consummate misery be imagined? No tyrant has it in his power to inflict any thing like this; yet there was

Digitized by Google

no guilt here, I mean no guilt connected with such sufferings. He was not answerable for the gathering of the clouds, or the dispersion of the dust that filled the air for forty miles. Nor was one deviseable purpose, even in reference to a future state, to be answered by this wretch's expiring under feelings that might have made him envy a martyr in the fire. Sufferings we are told are intended to make us better; but what benefit, here or hereafter, could be derived from his? Were his virtues exalted, or his love of the Deity inflamed by such a state of feeling?—I trow not."

"If suffering does not purify us," said Zaira, "it is our own fault."

"You do not speak as you feel," said Cardonneau.

Zaira could only weep in answer.

"Nothing can be more absurd," said Cardonneau, "than to talk of the beneficial effect of suffering—nothing can be more contrary to experience. The pride of

Digitized by Google

the ancients enabled them to defy it, or to talk as if they did—which comes to the same thing with the readers. And the peculiar theology of Christians has taught them to speak of the benefit of sufferings; but they are obliged to take all on credit, and draw on futurity for what time cannot afford to pay them. But look to life, not to theory; look not to what men *should* do, but to what they really *are* doing. Experience teaches that sufferings, whether physical or mental, so far from acting as emollients on the heart and passions, tend generally to imbitter the one, and exasperate the other. Is there any place where less patience is to be found than in an hospital? How many pious ejaculations are wafted in the curses, groans, and inarticulate imprecations of a field of battle? Grief itself, though more refined in its expression, is not less hostile. Grief, violent grief, generally at first vents itself in blasphemy,

Digitized by Google

and then sinks into a kind of querulous sullenness."

"You have spoken only of suffering," said Zaira; "you have yet to mention what ample resources a cultivated intellect can oppose to pain. All that the mind can suffer, the mind, properly armed, can also repel."

"That is the false language of a theorist," said Cardonneau; "the language of one who has reached the top of the house by help of a ladder, and then draws it up after him, and bids the gazers below follow him at their leisure. When we speak of intellectual resources, of the oil which they effuse over the storms of life, we should recollect that those resources are in the power of a very few. The Deity, we are told, has declared, that in the sweat of man's brow he shall eat his bread; and certainly he has kept his word. The bare care of providing for subsistence, for food for the

Digitized by Google

day that is passing over them, occupies about nine-tenths of our species. What time, what opportunity have they for intellectual improvement, or philosophical discussion? I grant that an enlarged mind can reason evil almost out of its nature, certainly out of its power, but what means have savages and slaves to attain enlargement of mind? (and all men are either savages or slaves.) The wild naked wanderer on the banks of Senegal, or of the Lake Ontario, who rises at the break of day to obtain with his bow and arrow provision for the day; and 'the pale artist who plies the sickly trade,' in a close shop in the unwholesome streets of Paris or of London, are bound down by the same yoke of necessity—they must toil daily to live daily—their thoughts must be of the earth, earthly. What can enlarged intellect do for them, but mock their misery by objects of hopeless and impossible attainment? They may form subjects of specu-

Digitized by Google

lation to a philosopher, but can they ever hope to be philosophers themselves?"

He paused—Zaira was silent; he went on with irresistible eagerness, with all the eloquence of vice, more eloquent than virtue, because more in need of rhetorical support, and trusting its cause chiefly to words. He went on successfully—we spare our readers his arguments. The sum of them was this:—Either there is no God, or, if there is, he is a Being wholly insensible to human actions and their consequences. The predominance of evil in creation is irreconcileable with the idea of the *active* presidency of a benevolent Being; it intimates either a want of power, or a want of will, to remove that evil which defaces creation, and (in the apprehension of all finite judgments) frustrates the object of the Creator. Now Omnipotence cannot be charged with want of power; want of will, therefore, or the want of essential benevolence in the nature of the

Digitized by Google

Deity, is the next conclusion; but there is something so frightful and appalling in this that atheism itself seems a relief to it.

"Must atheism be my refuge then?" said Zaira, pausing at the brink of the precipice to which he had led her, and viewing the blackness of the gulph beneath, immeasureable, impenetrable. "Is this the region, this the soil, the clime?" said then the lost archangel.

"The alternative is necessary," said Cardonneau.

"And tremendous," added Zaira—and she retired to do the worst thing she could—to deliberate on it.

That evening there was a numerous company at De Viosmenil's; he had observed her lately, and feared she was listening too much to Cardonneau; he sought to divide her attention by numbers. The evening was so serene and beautiful that some of the company were dispersed through the gardens, while the rest were seated in

Digitized by Google

a saloon, whose large glass doors opened on it, and which was illuminated only by the bright moon, thus they appeared to be together; the same pure element was respired and enjoyed by both, whether in the saloon or garden.

In France, nothing is more usual than the discussion of abstract questions on the most important subjects. The company, as they wandered through the gardens, spoke of the immortality of the soul, and the being of a God, with the perfect ease of continental latitudinarianism. The scene, and the conversation, brought strongly to the recollection of Zaira that resplendent passage in Tacitus that precedes the account of the death of Thrasea, "Tum ad Thraseam, *in hortis agentem*, quæstor consulis missus, advesperascente jam die. Inlustrium virorum fæminarumque cœtus frequentes egerat, maxime intentus Demetrio, Cynicæ institutionis doctori, cum quo, ut conjectare erat intentione vultus et auditis (si qua clarius proloquebantur,) de

Digitized by Google

naturâ animæ et dissociatione spiritus corporisque inquirebat, donec advenit Domitius Cæcilianus," &c. She repeated these lines to Cardonneau, who observed, that the ancients, at least, possessed the advantage of a free discussion of the most awful subjects that the mind of man can admit or contemplate. "In modern society," said he, "we are 'hedged up unto the faith;' revealed religion has done so much for us, that we have no discoveries to make for ourselves; and if we had, we dare not—orthodoxy stops our mouths at every turn; the empire of the ocean of futurity is possessed by a mighty power, who does not suffer a single bark to sail on a voyage of discovery. In Greece they managed matters much better."

"Not in Greece, surely," said De Viosmenil, "where they persecuted Anaxagoras for teaching the elements of the Copernican system, with as much virulence as the Inquisition, centuries after, persecuted Galileo for the same crime, and where

Digitized by Google

Socrates was put to death for introducing Καινὰς Θεὰς. When you speak of liberality, my friend, forget that the ancients existed."

"The liberty of conversation they certainly allowed, and encouraged," said Cardonneau; "and I cannot but think that the Dialogue of Thrasea and Demetrius was a much better induction to the death of a rational being discussing those sublime subjects, when he is just on the point of proving the truth or the falsehood of his arguments, than the manner in which we prepare for it—a darkened chamber, closed curtains, tiptoe attendants, silent friends, and the hireling prayers of an ecclesiastical pedant."

Zaira's attention was drawn away by some of the company coming in from the garden, and concluding their debates on "fixed fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute," by proposing to try the sortes Virgilianæ—Singular vacillation of the human mind between scepticism and the blindest credulity!

Digitized by Google

Cardonneau said it was perfectly natural—that the restless pain of the human mind was for ever impelling it to make these wide excursions, and traverse the whole extent of intellectual space between the frigid zone of infidelity and the torrid one of superstition.—"It is a pity it does not rest in the temperate one of religion at last," said De Viosmenil. The company were now learning their fate from the pages of Virgil. Zaira looked on; she involuntarily remembered that night in Dublin when she had tried them—and when she was called on to follow the example of the rest, she shrunk away. She saw Cardonneau's smile of derision, and, ashamed of having incurred, or encountered it, she advanced timidly. It was a singular accident, that this evening also she should open on a passage equally significant,—

"Tunc vero infelix, fatis exterrita Dido,
Mortem orat, tædet cœli convexa tueri."

Digitized by Google

She stood aghast; it seemed as if the finger of Heaven was writing her destiny even on a page that she opened by accident. De Viosmenil tried to divert her attention by repeating the often-repeated remark on the ignorance of astronomy, so obvious in the expression "cœli *convexa*." He felt in a moment the attempt was vain. Cardonneau repeated almost audibly, "Another Æneas may be found."

Zaira retired at these words, which intimated more of Cardonneau's mind than he had yet ventured to shew—she retired to think, but not of him. She surveyed her splendid apartment with a melancholy air; flowers were there, whose fragrance she was no longer sensible of—books, which she no longer enjoyed, or indeed understood—her harp was there, which she never touched. These instruments of pleasure are a perpetual reproach to us when we are under the influence of grief; we try to transfer the reproach to them, and complain that they have lost the

Digitized by Google

power of pleasing, because we dread to tell ourselves that we have ceased to be pleased. She turned from them all in infinite, unspeakable loathing of soul. She threw herself beside the window, and gazed long on the lovely moon; the objects of nature always suggest or cherish a delicious melancholy; their very silence appears a kind of speechless consolation to the unfortunate; "there is no language, but a voice is heard among them." The objects of art, on the contrary, always present themselves as ministers of pleasure, and insult us by their presence, when they become only the remembrances of sensations which they no longer excite, but by the force of contrast.

Zaira sat long at the window; the clock struck two,—all was hushed in the house. The beauty of the night seemed increased and confirmed by this suspension of all human existence. No one spoke, moved, or breathed. There was a kind of spiritual glo-

Digitized by Google

ry in the light and in the hour. The wretched Zaira, parched by that fever of the soul, whose thirst no water on earth can be found to quench, quitted her room and wandered into the garden. The garden seemed too confined for her; her heart burned within her; the atheistical sentiments of Cardonneau had taken strong hold of her mind; her philosophical religion made but a poor defence against them. Grief took their part with terrible power; yes, grief, that irresistibly impels the mind to the extreme either of religion or of scepticism. A mediocrity of religion is not suited to a strong crisis of feeling. She found a kind of miserable relief in plunging into the darkness of atheism —religion had not light enough for her— it must be a mild habitual light, to whose benign diffusion we have long been accustomed, before we can participate in its comforts—but absolute scepticism furnishes us with a sudden desperate promise of relief. There are no gradations, no pre-

Digitized by Google

paratory steps; we rush into it, and attain a horrible sullen repose.

Perhaps there were other causes that influenced Zaira in the present state of her mind;—in grief we certainly do not wish to ascribe our sufferings to an intelligent cause—it is more consoling to think that chance, or blind fate, is armed against us. An intelligent being promises no respite to our sufferings; if they proceed from *intention*, there is no knowing where they may end, and we must always connect the idea of guilt with them, for an intelligent being cannot be supposed to inflict sufferings without provocation; while the inflictions of chance are obviously arbitrary, and though they may excite in us a species of resentment at the indignity we suffer from mechanical unconscious causes, certainly justify us from all *responsibility* about it, and make us look to relief from causes as unexpected as those that produced our calamities.—There have

Digitized by Google

been unhappy people who have said, "I dare not thank the Deity for the few gleams of comfort I enjoy, for then I must also refer my sufferings to *him*, and they are by far the most numerous."

To think that God is angry with and punishes us, is a tremendous thought,—a thought that has driven the strongest minds to incurable madness,—to ascribe our distress to the physical operation of a necessary cause, arms us with a stubborn resolution, that knows little pain, and *no remorse*. Thus she was rapidly taking shelter in the enemy's camp. The garden, with its placid regular beauty, tortured her by its contrast to the agitation of her soul. A gate, at the extremity of it, opened into a wood; she hurried into that wood, its darkness was as light unto her, it seemed as a shelter from her own thoughts, and she fled to it with avidity. Nature, in all its rich and exhaustless luxuriance, has no-

Digitized by Google

thing to the eye or to the soul so delicious as the mild splendour of moonlight, shed over the darkness of a forest. There is darkness beneath for the unhappy to muse —there is light above for the happy to gaze on—and the trembling gleams between the branches give a strong image of life, chequered indeed with fitful and precarious lustre, but of which the predominant image is gloom—diversified, but essential.

Zaira wandered on; the beauty of the night, the mildness of the climate, precluded all apprehension from her wandering at this late hour. She found herself in a part of the wood where the thick-mingling branches excluded all light, but a tremulous and checquered gleam, that appeared and disappeared among the foliage above, as it was agitated slightly by the breeze. Suddenly a figure appeared to her in the darkness; a white figure, as large as life. She started at first, but a moment af-

Digitized by Google

ter approached it; just where it seemed to stand, the trees opened a little, and the moonlight fell strongly on it, producing a remarkable and solemn effect. It was a figure of Christ on the cross, which had been taken from a ruined church in the neighbourhood, and placed there by the peasantry. It was of wood, but it was well executed, and the light that fell on it at once concealed its defects, and magnified its expression. What an object for a mind in the state of Zaira's!—Accident, that had so often presented her with the most terrible omens, seemed in this to seek to make atonement. The image of the Saviour of the world hanging on the cross a sacrifice for mankind, surrounded by darkness, and concentrating and reflecting the light solely from his own figure, was an intuitive symbol of relief. She approached it, as she would the presence of a friend. The pale and dying countenance, the woe-bent head, the outspread arms, seemed to unite the

Digitized by Google

expression of suffering and protection—singular but intelligible combination. None can pity but those who have suffered. "He that suffered, being tempted, is able to succour those that are tempted."

As Zaira gazed on this figure, it seemed to live, to speak to her. Texts of scripture rushed on her heart, as if whispered to it by the Deity. She appeared to hear these sounds issuing audibly from the lifeless lips of the figure—"Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." She obeyed the call thus echoed from the bottom of her heart; she prostrated herself before the cross. Her spirit was bowed down along with her body, as she exclaimed, "Oh, my God! accept a heart that has wandered, but longs to return to its Saviour. Purify it, regenerate it, fill it with the love of you alone. Had it known no other but yours, it had never been almost broken. Let your Spirit descend on it, and aid me to struggle with

Digitized by Google

that image, for which all its pulses have beat, which has been wrapt in its very core. You alone are worthy of that place, which a mortal has too long usurped. Vindicate it for yourself, and set me free. Deliver me into the glorious liberty of the children of God, unconscious of any presence, incapable of admitting any image, but your's; dead to the world, and absorbed in God alone."

But though she uttered these words, it seemed as if some inner winding of her treacherous heart was disclosed to her, where the image of Charles rested, and defied the power even of heaven to displace him. It seemed to her as if she dreaded lest her own prayers should be heard; and that if the Deity had that moment offered to efface that image for ever from her soul, to make it as the image of one she had never seen, or seen always with indifference, she would have shrunk from the offer, and implored any other infliction at his hands.

Digitized by Google

The discovery of this self-betraying duplicity, this treachery of the heart, at a moment when she believed herself all-sincere, flung her into an agony—she grovelled at the foot of the cross—she pressed her bosom to the cold earth, as if crushing her heart could change it—she inwardly petitioned the mercy of God, with groanings that cannot be uttered.—Alas! this paroxysm of feeling had nothing in alliance with that broken and contrite state of heart, which we are told God will not despise; it was the agony of those who love, not the "desire of such as be sorrowful."—She had sought God in the whirlwind and the earthquake, but God was not there.

The exhaustion of her feelings by their own vehemence was the only relief she experienced. She waited prostrate on the ground for the answer of heaven—she waited for some dawning of light on her soul—some smile from the divine countenance—

Digitized by Google

some fluttering of the dove, as his wings, outspread in heaven, prepared to descend on her soul.—"There was no voice, nor any that answered."

It is not thus God is to be sought, or, perhaps, he only hides himself to teach us the necessity of absolute dependence, and ceaseless prayer. He is a God that waiteth to be gracious; but he requires also that we should wait for him.

Zaira rose stupified, dried up, heart, and soul, and brain—something hostile, sullen, and indurated, bound up in the very core of her feelings. She felt as if she had been repulsed, spurned from the foot-stool of the Almighty. She retired slowly, gazing on the crucifix with the dry eye of despair; her lips moved, and she uttered sounds that seemed to issue from them, almost without her being conscious of them. "There is no mercy for me there," said she, her eyes fixed on the cross; "those arms are ex-

Digitized by Google

tended to embrace all the world but me; that head was crowned with thorns not for me; not a drop of that blood ever streamed for me; I am excluded for ever; I have no love for God in my heart, or I never could have loved a mortal so well. Oh, my God!" she cried, bursting into an uncontrollable agony of tears; "oh, my God! forgive me. When I was happy I believed religion and love to be the same thing; I imagined that, in worshipping that perfect being, I was paying the most acceptable homage to my Creator; I looked on him as reflecting the image of Him who is love, and whose image ought to be reflected in his creatures. I have been deceived—I have been guilty, perhaps. My God, my God! accept a broken heart, and heal it."

Again she prostrated herself before the crucifix,—again, with tears that seemed to gush from her heart, with convulsions that almost threatened her existence, she imple-

Digitized by Google

red God to infuse a sentiment of peace into her heart. She was too anxious to pass immediately from one state of strong excitement to another. She knew that there must be gradations, preliminary steps, painful, but necessary to be trod, but she had not patience to tread them. She wished, from a devoted lover, to become a devoted religionist in a moment—it is not to be done *in a moment*. She could not do what no mortal can do, pass from the desperate frenzy of earthly love to the "passion of immortals." She could not remain in the half-way-house of hopeful tranquillity, like Christiana, in the Pilgrim's Progress, waiting at the Interpreter's house for a guide. Dreadful state! when reason forbids the only resource which the human mind in these terrible vacillations imperiously demands.

She was too rational for superstition, the necessary intermediate stage in such a case

Digitized by Google

with such a mind,—the stupifying opiate that was to procure slumber between the transition from one feverish state to another. Deserted by her earthly love, rejected, as she believed, by God, she stood for a moment reeling in body and mind, on the precipice between time and eternity. It was the Zorat arch, a hair-breadth's space, and hell beneath it. The evil power prevailed;—she turned away from the cross;—a burning rigour, like that of iron heated red-hot, seemed to pervade her whole frame. She felt as if she could sustain the horrors of penal eternity that moment. She could not long support this preternatural "harrowing up." The mortal instrument was wound beyond its pitch and beyond its powers; the strings cracked in the effort. She fell to the ground;—she was found there the next morning by Delphine, who had quitted the house at an early hour in search of her, hearing from

Digitized by Google

her attendants she was not in her apartment. She was found stretched on the earth, drenched in her cold tears, colder than the dew that drenched her garments from head to foot. They bore her to her apartment, but for several days she was very ill, and even deranged. Her intellects (those intellects so powerful, so worshipped) were sunk below infancy, were as wild and weak as dotage. The struggle of religion and love was obviously predominant in the wanderings of her intellect. Strange and rich fragments might be picked up amid the burning ruin, as the conflagration of Corinth produced the extraordinary metalline amalgamation known by the name of Corinthian brass. She called for the cross, and Madame St Maur, who, since the return of the Bourbons, had become *une tres bonne Catholique*, enquired for a crucifix among the servants. One was produced. "Hold it near me," cried

Digitized by Google

Zaira; "let the blood drop on me;—one drop will purify my heart. They held it close to her, then she mistook the figure on the cross for that of De Courcy;—she kissed in that agony of devotion which love produces when mingled with the sentiments of religion. It was frightful to see her;—at one time she implored it to pray for her as the representative of Christ—at another she prayed to it as the image of De Courcy.

To this horrible depravation of the imagination a deep and sullen calm succeeded. Madame St Maur was with her constantly, but could scarce ever get a word from her. Her fever was gone, but her mind evidently was overclouded. One day that Madame St Maur was absent for a short time on a visit, she suddenly ordered her carriage, and desired to be conveyed back to her house in Paris. Her servants trembled while they obeyed her.

Digitized by Google

The next day Madame St Maur got a letter from her, written with a trembling hand, and in broken sentences; part of it apologized for her abrupt flight. She said, "Do not be angry with me, Delphine, for flying from your sight; the very feeling that rendered me incapable of bearing the sight of a friend, is a sufficient punishment for any offence. How altered I must be when the testimonies of your kindness are a torture I can no longer endure!—that Cain like feeling, that brand on the heart, deeper than on the forehead, separates me for ever from my species. A word of kindness stabs me more than the most cruel insult; *it is* the most cruel of all insults. I ask myself, why am I thus capable of inspiring affection in every heart, but the only one in the world in which mine is bound up? why am I mocked with offers of kindness from others? Perhaps the bitterest ingredient in my cup is, that friend-

Digitized by Google

ship itself irritates me. I curse my own ingratitude, yet I cannot be grateful. When he left me, he took away the jewels of silver and of gold, and when I attempt to follow him, the waves close over me.

* * * *

"Had he left me one single source of feeling to substitute in the place of that of which he deprived me, I could have pardoned him; but he has deprived my heart of all sensibility but that of pain. It is in vain I attempt to generate a sentiment of religion in my soul. I try in vain to penetrate the cause of the sufferings that oppress me. In my prosperity I never neglected the poor, or the unhappy; but perhaps I did not act from that feeling of pure devotion to God which he requires; perhaps it was only the gratification of my

Digitized by Google

own benevolence I sought. I have not the courage now to enquire into this.

* * * *

"I may ultimately obtain some relief from assisting the unhappy; it is the only thing that appears to lighten the burden of my heart at times. I visit the hospitals, I relieve all the poor I hear of. May not this at some period bring me nearer to God?

"Pray for me, Delphine,—alas, the prayers of the happy have little unction! Pray, however, that I may be kept from despair. My portion must be religion, or"——.

* * * *

Immediately on the receipt of this letter, Madame St Maur set out for Paris; on

Digitized by Google

her arrival she found Zaira was out; she had gone to a convent at some little distance from Paris. She had at this time an idea of taking the veil, and she understood that this convent was remarkable for the strictness of its discipline and its manners. "So much the better," said Zaira to herself; "their deadening influence may in time still and compose me; I may grow a mechanical thing of habits and of duties; a being that performs its functions by the sound of a bell—a wreath hung on a grave to wither there."

She arrived at the convent—Over the gate was the inscription copied from the Port-Royal convent; on the outside of it—"Time is before thee;" on the inside—"Time is for ever behind thee." Zaira gazed on this long. The superior was engaged, and while waiting for her, she walked up and down a gallery leading to the chapel, (this motion pain had sen-

Digitized by Google

dered habitual to her;) an old nun came out of the choir, and stood observing her. There was a singular contrast between their figures; Zaira's, whose beauty was yet unfaded, but whose features had the expression of despair, and the old religieuse, in whose calm demeanour, and placid pallid aspect, there was not a trace of human feeling, or of human suffering. She stood a complete exemplar of the annihilating effect of monasticism—torpid, obtuse, self-contracted, self-sufficed, without malevolence or kindness, pleasure or pain, love or grief. Zaira, the beautiful, the intellectual Zaira, gazed on her with envy. "How long have you lived here?" said she.

"So long that I have lost every trace of my former existence."

"Had you friends in the world?"

"I had, but they are dead."

"While they lived, it must have given you pleasure to see them at the grate, or in the parlour?"

Digitized by Google

"It did at first, a little; but as I lost my recollection of the world, they began to appear to me like strangers."

"Your life must then be very monotonous?"

"So much the better; that tranquillizes."

"Have you any books?"

"None, but what are necessary for my duties. The superior, I have heard, has books; I never enquired."

"In this deep retirement you must have cultivated some resources for which you have such leisure. Do you love music?"

"Yes, in the choir."

"Has it no charms but in the choir?"

"I have never tried. I believe I am pleased with the sound rather from habit than any thing else, for, except from the words, I should not know the difference between the De Profundis and the Veni Creator Spiritus."

"Are you fond of painting?"

Digitized by Google

"There is a very fine painting over the altar of the chapel, I have been told; I don't know; I am as well pleased with the wood-cuts in the life of St Francis Xavier."

"Have you never sought to employ your heart? have you no favourites among the sisters? have you no animal whom you caress? when your affections overflow within your bosom, what vent, what mode of expression do you adopt?"

The nun stared up in her face with an expression of such perfect apathy—such inaccessibility of heart; her countenance said so plainly, "What new language is this in which I am addressed?" that Zaira felt in a moment she was answered.

"Your time must be very much unoccupied," said Zaira, pursuing this hopeless enquiry, for misery made her very inquisitive; "how do you employ your leisure?"

"Leisure! my duties leave me very lit-

Digitized by Google

tle; at the intervals, I pick lint for an hospital."

"You have nothing to love on earth?"

"I seek to love God alone."

"That is right," said Zaira; "but have you ever known happiness?"

"I have attained peace," said the old nun, crossing herself—"Have you any other questions to ask?"

"None," said Zaira. "I fear I have been troublesome."

"Not at all," said the old nun. "I pray God to give you peace."

"Have you ever known happiness?" said Zaira, vehemently.

"I have always known peace," said the nun.

At these words Zaira turned away; tears of the bitterest anguish, mixed with pride, ran fast down her cheeks; she had no witness of her agony; the old nun had gone away. "Oh, my God!" she cried, "are these

Digitized by Google

beings, desecrated of their humanity *almost*—of the divinity of reason *at least*—the objects of your exclusive favour? Must we become "temples of the Holy Ghost" only by ceasing to become receptacles of a thinking spirit? Do you, indeed, require for your service such beings, in preference to intelligent souls that love knowledge, that have dared to penetrate the secrets of the intellectual world, and to extract from the cultivation of the arts a few flowers to scatter over the desert of life? Will you reject such because they have expanded the faculties you gave them? Does it please you that they should remain contracted and withered? Was that wonderful and admirable vessel, the soul—that "ship of Heaven!" constructed only to lie rotting on the spot where it was launched? Never to spread its sails on a voyage of discovery, to traverse the intellectual deep, and touch at the isles of light?"

Digitized by Google

She went away without seeing the superior; this specimen of conventual life was enough for her. She tried to form a system for herself; it was composed very much of austerities, penances, and painful acts of charity; visiting the most loathsome states of disease; viewing the naked deformity of poverty, more loathsome than disease; holding herself down to the picture of the moral cancer of evil eating into the core of life, and melting the fair face of things into a featureless and festering mass of corruption.

This may be called the natural religion of the unhappy. The idea of atonement is indissolubly connected with that of suffering, of which we always suspect some unknown offence to be the cause, and thus we punish ourselves merely for being unhappy. An atonement must be made either *for us*, or *by us*; and those who have not been taught to look to Calvary, or have

Digitized by Google

looked, and in their pride turned away, must construct a kind of substitute out of their own sufferings. To this she attempted to add a theology of her own; it was more inquisitive, daring, and autocrative than catholicism; more full of exterior forms, self-infliction, and "voluntary humility," than the reformed religion; its speculative part verged very much toward Calvinism; its outward towards popery; for her imagination dictated even in religion, and it was gratified by combining the ambitious and exclusive theory of Calvin, (which may be said to establish a kind of religious aristocracy,) with the meretricious and attractive exterior of Catholicism.

Madame St Maur in vain tried to dissuade her from the rigours she imposed on herself, under the influence of her new habits. She went on with desperate and fruitless perseverance. When we become the objects of vengeance to ourselves, (and

Digitized by Google

such a state of mind has been,) there is no victim whom we punish with more severity. We can forgive any thing that has deceived us, sooner than our own hearts. She saw no company; admitted no friend but Madame St Maur; she never read; if her hand touched a book accidentally, she withdrew it as if a serpent stung her; music was the last thing she relinquished; as she placed, with her own hands, the covering on her harp, *never to be removed*, a few tears dropt from her eyes. So intense was the pain of her heart at this moment, that she did not wipe them away; she was not conscious that she wept. Those are very bitter tears which we forget to dry.

Cardonneau often and vainly applied for admittance now; he had overdone his own mischief, his purpose had

"O'erleapt itself, and fall'n on t'other side."

He had sought to make her an atheist, and

Digitized by Google

he had driven her into the fearful extreme of misanthropical religion,—a religion all pains and penalties, all suffering here, and terror hereafter. Like the sorceress in the Old Testament, he had attempted to show his art, and call up the delusions that waited on his power; but a more potent spirit answered the invocation; and could he have beheld the present state of his victim, he would, like that sorceress, have "cried out for fear" at the apparition he had unwittingly raised. Of this man's very name she felt an invincible horror; she had a secret feeling, that to Cardonneau's system she must come at last; and this thought never occurred to her mind, without filling it with the most dreadful agitation. Like animals in a state of fascination, her mind seemed to approach this point with a velocity, the greater in proportion to the horror with which she contemplated it. Cardonneau was the object of her in-

Digitized by Google

vincible abhorrence; she trembled when she heard his knock at the door, which she distinctly recognized from that of any other person; she thought her servants never could deny her fast enough. It appeared as if excluding his person was a kind of protection against the infection of his system. She felt almost in the state of those who are said to have made a compact with the evil spirit, and who dread every moment his coming to claim the fulfilment of his bond—"Not yet, not yet," she repeated to herself, as Cardonneau reluctantly quitted her door—"my time is not yet come."

The time was coming sooner than she believed. One day she returned home earlier than usual; there was a peculiar expression in her countenance that rivetted the attention of Madame St Maur in a moment; there was less of grief, and more of resolution and calmness than usual; but it

Digitized by Google

was that kind of resolution and calmness, to which Madame St Maur would have preferred the most frightful expression of passion.

"I can no longer," she said, in a deep, hollow, but firm tone,—"I can no longer support this existence—I cannot make myself religious—I cannot create the love of God in my soul—my heart is stone—my conscience is seared—the heaven above me is brass, and the earth beneath iron. I am cursed with a curse—not one being, divine or human, in the illimitable creation, can touch my heart with a sentiment of affection. It is in vain," said she, answering Madame St Maur's look of appeal; "it is in vain—I have made the experiment with all the powers of my nature—I have grown to the pavement with my knees—I have clung to the cross with the arms of my soul—not a beam of light has fallen on me—not a whisper of hope has reached

Digitized by Google

me. I am the unwatered fleece—I am a fountain sealed—I am the rock from which not even the arm of the prophet can bring one drop of water. I pray, and my words are all mechanical. I receive no answer even from my own heart. I read the Bible, and when I have done, I shut it as a book whose language has no meaning for me. I exhaust myself on works of charity, but they have no charms for me. I am glad when I have been the means of removing physical pain; but when mental sufferings are spoken of I shudder, from my incapacity, either to sympathise with or console them. I tremble at the blessings of their gratitude; they wish me health and long life—*long life*, I cannot support *that*. Their blessings are curses—I cannot support this existence. I cannot love God, and man will not love me. What have I to do with life any longer?—my last resource is near."

She paused some time; but Madame St

Digitized by Google

Maur, who felt nothing but a wild sensation of terror, did not, and could not answer her.

"Delphine," said Zaira, "my dear Delphine, I am happy in announcing to you, that your toils are nearly concluded. To watch the wanderings of a distracted spirit, is worse, perhaps, than to feel them. I dismiss you from your painful, horrible attendance. I call to you confidently, as a traveller does to a guide of whom he has need no longer. You may lay down your torch, I cannot see by its light; the rest of my journey must be past in darkness. I have to travel the valley of the shadow of death; that is a path that must be trod alone."

She paused again—Madame St Maur's vague look spoke distress, but not intelligence.

"I must die," said Zaira; "Do you understand me now, Delphine? I speak thus merely to save you and my friends the

Digitized by Google

task of vindicating my memory. I do not act from a rash impulse; I am not mad; no one need bring in their verdict, lunacy, (as they say in England;) I am determined on dying,—while I retain my will and my reason, no one can pretend to controul me. I am sane and sensible, I will procure for myself the easiest means of death; but if I am opposed, I cannot answer for my not having recourse to those horrible modes that will disfigure my body, leave an impeachment on my conscience, and the eternal burden on that of my friends, of having precipitated that which they could not prevent."

Madame St Maur was no fit auditor for such a communication—her knowledge was confined to this life only, of which she was no bad judge, but she could not be an arbiter in the crisis of destiny—she could not hold the balance with a steady hand where suicide was weighed against despair; her

Digitized by Google

hand trembled and dropt the scales on this emergency—she had lost the power of soothing Zaira; she never had the power of controuling her. In the struggle between her terrors and her affection, she fell into strong fits, and when she recovered, as a last resource, wrote to Viosmenil to come to Paris instantly to her assistance.

The generous sensible Viosmenil came, but all assistance was too late. Zaira had thought, and would think, for herself. She had shut herself up with some books; she did not tell what they were, but she read them incessantly. She scarce ever spoke to Viosmenil or Madame St Maur, but they read her terrible purpose in her face, characterized by the indelible lines of thoughtful despair—*Deliberata morte ferocior*. The tears of these generous friends burst forth involuntarily when they thought of this brilliant, benevolent, happy being, who had seemed more like a vision that ho-

Digitized by Google

vered in a poetic imagination, than a creature that walked this dry sterile earth of ours, who had never been seen but to dazzle, never spoke but to charm; this φιλομμειδης Αφροδιτη, with tenfold the charms of the fabled cestus, so suddenly fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf,—so withered, irritable, inaccessible, repelling, paralyzed in mind, *effete* in heart. They spoke of her according to their different modes of feeling, (in which, however, there was a *concordia discors.*)

"Oh, what a woman lost to society!" cried Delphine

"Oh, what a noble creature lost to life!" said Viosmenil.

As they were speaking, Zaira entered, and instantly began to address Viosmenil on the subject that occupied her mind, as if its suggestions were incontrollable, as if she was the organ of a spirit whose impulses she could not resist. "I have been

Digitized by Google

astonished," said she, "at my own weakness. When one is determined on the greatest of all risks, it seems a miserable pusillanimity to deliberate on the means. Yet why should I conceal it? I wish to die by the easiest means, by means that will not convulse my frame, or destroy my reason; let life be as wretched as it may, such a death is very horrible. I would not terrify my friends in my last moments, or leave my image distorted on their memories. I wish to die calmly, in the full possession (if possible) of my faculties; their possession at that moment would be a consolation to me, though their consciousness now is an incessant torment. If I could discover such a means of death, I would die to-night."

The firmness of her voice in speaking these words left them little doubt of the strength of her resolution. Viosmenil eagerly grasped at the hope which this hesi-

Digitized by Google

tation about *the means* seemed to suggest. He spoke of a self-inflicted death being necessarily violent; and even that, by the operation of laudanum, which is supposed the easiest, is often repelled by the constitution, and produces the severest sufferings without causing death. He observed also of suicides, that their features are known to retain, beside the traces of bodily agony, a peculiar expression of convulsive reluctance, of *posthumous repentance*, if it may be so called, that seemed to indicate a change of sentiment when all change was become fruitless. He added too, as a well-known fact, *that in the cases of those who had been prevented from meditated suicide, or recovered after the attempt, not one in one thousand had ever made it again.* He left this strong fact to sink into Zaira's mind without a comment.

That night she passed in the study of the classical authors, whom she supposed

Digitized by Google

likely to satisfy her mind by arguments, or confirm her resolution by examples of the step she meditated. There were enough of both to animate her to desperation. It was a singular spectacle—a human being on the verge of human existence is an awful object to its fellow-creatures—it is a sight so rarely witnessed, except by those whose feelings are paralyzed by grief, or callous from habit, that there have been persons who have sought to gratify their fearful curiosity by witnessing public executions, by seeing men brought to the brink of the grave without disease, or any of the ordinary means of death, and passing through the tremendous change in the presence of multitudes—multitudes who must partake that change with them in the stillness and darkness of the domestic chamber of death. Still more awful, certainly more interesting, is the spectacle of a being brought to that state by its own choice, and becoming itself

Digitized by Google

its own executioner, all personal sensibility annihilated, and the sufferers inflicting on themselves all they could have feared or shunned from the persecution of a mortal enemy. In Zaira's case there was every aggravation. Youth and beauty seem at perpetual war with death; they have not an image in common. Wealth seems to defy the vicissitudes of mortality, and to be always sufficient for its own enjoyment, as long as its duration is protracted; and genius, always eminent in time, and aspiring after eternity, appears to be still more independent of the transition. It has a power of assimilating itself to both worlds; it seems scarce a resident of earth while on earth; its communications are even here extended to futurity. Yet, in the possession of youth and beauty, and genius and affluence, Zaira sat meditating death, as if she was one to whom the want of all these accessories of existence had left no other alternative.

Digitized by Google

To the painter or the philosopher, to the lover of the picturesque or the terrible, her figure and employment that night presented a strange and fearful contrast. Her splendid apartment, her beauty, the books, containing all the wealth of antiquity, that were scattered round her, formed a singular opposition to the terrible purpose that filled her soul while she sat there. It seemed a kind of luxurious reception for death; a defiance of his terrors, like that which Juan, at his magnificent banquet, prepares for the spectre whom he expects to meet him there. She read long, but without any fixed ideas; she read rather to confirm her own sentiments, than to add to them; she was beyond argument, she sought for support.

The images of Cato, Brutus, and Portia, struck most on her imagination—they had not been hurried out of life by indirect or ignoble means—they had perished by their own hands, but not under the power of foul

Digitized by Google

and degraded passions—they might have been wrong, but they were not debased. Her imagination still prevailed, and she dwelt long on the death of Brutus, announced by a phantom, appearing with such mysterious solemnity in the shadowy darkness of the tent where the warlike philosopher sat studying alone at midnight;—then she reverted to the death-scene, after the loss of Philippi—night—the scattered attendants—the rock against which he leaned—the sparkling sky at which he gazed—the apostrophe to virtue, containing perhaps too much reproach, but indicating complete independence of spirit in the midst of suffering, and on the verge of death;—all this at once flattered her imagination and her pride; it combined a false confidence in human power, with a delicious reminiscence of those objects of nature, that are not usually the accompaniments of a dying hour. She could have

Digitized by Google

died *there*. To carry an unabated resolution to the verge of eternity, has often been the lot of saints and martyrs; but it has seldom been their lot to expire under the glittering resplendency of a Grecian sky. The accompanying circumstances of their death are as stern and hard as the iron that tears their joints; but when our souls, in parting, reflect the lustre of the objects that surround us, and that are assimilated to their loftiest emotions; when we breathe our last amid the glories of nature, and enjoy them to the last, our triumph is complete; it is but passing with an exalted tread from one apartment of the creation to another more spacious.

She contemplated the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra; there was certainly something in the situation of the latter that interested her more than the fate of patriots and stoics. Cleopatra was a woman, to whose lips the cup of joy and of grief had

Digitized by Google

been alternately held, and who had been compelled to drain both to the dregs. She had been a queen, a beauty, and a genius, surrounded by all that is eminent or enviable; the mistress of successive masters of the world; yet she died by her own hand. Over this picture Zaira paused like him in Terence, who, meditating a crime, encourages himself by the example of a god. She had remained so long alone this evening, that Madame St Maur became terrified; she went and knocked softly at the door, scarce expecting the answer of a living voice.

Zaira answered in a voice whose calmness surprised her.

"May I enter? may M. de Viosmenil enter then?" said Madame St Maur, in a trembling voice, for she had an indistinct consciousness, that where Viosmenil was admitted, there could be no danger.

De Viosmenil, hardly waiting for per-

Digitized by Google

mission, glided in after her. "I see," said he, glancing at the books, "I see who have been your companions—What is their counsel?"

"To die!" said Zaira.

"And what encouragement do they give you?"

"The wretched need little encouragement to invite them to change their destiny."

"If they are sure the change will be beneficial."

"The best and wisest of antiquity thought so," said Zaira, in the false confidence of her late studies.

"They were not Christians," said Viosmenil.

"The Gospel does not forbid suicide," said Zaira, starting at this observation.

"The Gospel does not forbid either parricide or incest in words," said Viosmenil; "but it condemns them implicitly; it is

Digitized by Google

the glory of Christianity that it is not a code, but a spirit of laws."

Zaira was silent for some moments after these words; but it appeared from the expression of her features, that the spirit was too strong to be cast out by words. She made an immediate effort to pass to some other subject. The effort failed. A long silence followed. Viosmenil had sense enough to lead back to the subject, and urge her to exhaust her mind on it; though a Frenchman, *he merited to be an Englishman.* He felt with Shakespeare, "give sorrow words."

Madame St Maur and he sat with her till morning. They felt, or they hoped, that if they could get her over this dreadful night, all would be well, (just as if grief had any connection with time).

Zaira spoke as calmly that night as if she had sat it out only to entertain her friends. *They* were delighted to hear her speak;

Digitized by Google

Madame St Maur encouraged her from habit. Zaira's eloquence appeared to her like the repetition of some delightful music she had been long accustomed to hear. Viosmenil urged her to speak from a stronger feeling; he thought it less dangerous for a woman to speak than to act; but he was much struck, as she spoke, by the remarkable change in her expression, and still declares that its traces on his memory will be ineffaceable.

She seemed to have come from conversing with the dead—she had been sitting as it were on the verge of mortality, and asking the secrets of the future state—she had been grasping at the inhabitants of the invisible world, as they passed in shadowy array before her memory, and bidding them tell their name, as she wrestled with them in darkness. The strength of her intellectual power, combined with the intenseness of her feelings, all working with painful

Digitized by Google

toil to "double the stormy cape," and find out a new communication with undiscovered worlds—the severity of her purpose—had wrought so on her exterior, that the expression of her figure and countenance were changed as by the lapse of years. She was "settled and beat up;" the rigour of her frame, the breathless stillness of her features, her rayless and unmoving eyes, her hollow voice, speaking always in one key, made her appear already like one of those whom she hastened to be among.

Viosmenil had come to reason with her, if she was capable of reasoning; but, awed and overcome, he remained only to listen.

At intervals she said, "How little is known of futurity? For how many ages was man contented with his ignorance of another world, though always complaining of this? Antiquity supplies nothing but conjecture; conjecture pursued rather as the exercise of reason, or the sport of ima-

Digitized by Google

gination, than in the hope of useful and profitable discovery. The mythology of Homer is very barren; he presents a train of gloomy phantoms, restless and dissatisfied; but his ideas are encumbered by matter; so, perhaps, are the ideas of all when turned to futurity. The purest of all theology mingles music * among the enjoyments of heaven. Virgil knew more than Homer: the march of the human mind in the path of knowledge had already begun; yet how little more than Homer has he told? His spirits in Elysium are merely mortals exempt from pain; their pursuits and pleasures are all terrestrial; his minstrels still sing, and his warriors exercise heroic games—

'Eadem sequitur cura repostos.'

There is no God there, whose presence con-

* Vide the Book of Revelation.

Digitized by Google

stitutes the beatitude of the departed, and but one shade of sentiment gives its delicious gloom to the picture—

> 'Hic quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit
> Secreti celant calles, et myrtea circum
> Sylva tegit, curæ non ipsæ in morte relinquunt.'

Their philosophers knew as little as their poets;—the *Somnium Scipionis* is beautiful, but not demonstrative. There is nothing satisfactory, nothing profound in their sentiments; they say nothing, for the truth of which they would have died. The great Jewish legislator does not make a future state the basis of his system. Of the translation of Enoch, (which might have led to its introduction), he speaks in mysterious brevity, and without a comment. In the study of the human mind, we are perplexed with perpetual inconsistencies. The insensibility of death expressed by the followers

Digitized by Google

of Mahomet must be ascribed to their fixed belief of a future state of happiness; and Bartholinus, 'De Causis Contemptæ Mortis,' attributes the fearless hardihood of the northern warriors to the same motive. Doubtless it was sufficiently powerful; yet the Greeks and Romans owed their stoicism, their courage, and their magnanimity, to the very absence of this motive. The majority of them knew nothing of a future state; they had no hope, indeed; but they had also no fear. But, perhaps, a different creed was requisite for a rude band of military barbarians, and a polished and intelligent people. The Koran or the Edda would never have done for a Plato or a Tacitus. Thus, wherever I turn, all is darkness; the darkness of scepticism, or the blindness of credulity. My feet stumble on the dark mountains; I seem to wander among tombs that all bear the inscriptions put there by the living, but none of them containing intelligence from the dead. One effort,

Digitized by Google

the result of a single moment's resolution, will tell me more than mortal can ever know. Were this the presumption of curiosity; were it the vain temerity of an Empedocles, I would be very guilty; but it is grief—grief (to whom our submission is never voluntary) that compels me, and I hope God will forgive me. Doubtless, the Deity would not have left men for so many ages under a fatal error, when it could be so easily removed. The tranquillity with which the ancients shifted off the burthen of life, proves that man's natural conscience does not consider it a crime; they had laws against murder, and even against ingratitude, but none against suicide. This could not be because the criminal was already beyond their reach; for the punishment of a crime is often visited on the relatives and descendants of the guilty; it must have been that they did not consider it a crime. Their fearless independence of death strikes me as irresistibly

Digitized by Google

powerful over the imagination at least. They looked on life as something which they could lay down when they pleased. Thrasea dissuades his wife from suicide, *because their daughter would be left unprotected.* He does not threaten her with the wrath of the Deity;—no terror waited on their dying hours. They considered death as they would any other natural evil; talked of it with equal calmness, and encountered it with perhaps greater resolution, because its infliction was shorter. Death, of which Christianity, if it has not taught us terror, has certainly taught us cowardice, they viewed only as a certain refuge from suffering, as an honourable defiance of those *creditors of the heart* which it has no longer the means to pay. I envy them this recklessness; I do not possess it. The national creed has

——— 'grown with my growth,
And strengthened with my strength.'

Digitized by Google

I cannot defy death as they have done. I loathe existence, but I dread futurity. We are weak, luxurious, and depraved beings; we are too much dependent on society and its artificial modes. What a sensation does suicide produce among us! If an instance of it occurs, the family (if of any consideration) are disgraced beyond the power of misfortune to disgrace them. Had the person been known to die the victim of the most profligate pursuits, the most loathsome vices,—had he died by inches in the sight of his agonizing family, in the hearts of whom the sight of his immedicable sufferings had sowed the seeds of their own deaths, all would have been well—the funeral would be conducted with due solemnity, and the eulogy of the departed properly declaimed by the survivors. But let that man be stated to have perished by his own hand, the scene is changed at once. We know nothing of his motives, but we

Digitized by Google

know them by charity implicit to have been very bad, such as shut him out from all sympathy but the shuddering sympathy of horror—such as condemn his family to shame and seclusion—such as leave on the act the doubtful construction, whether it was perpetrated under the pressure of distress or debt. Singular confusion of the causes of suffering arising from the present complicated state of society! Thus we reduce to the same level, the internal feeling of the impossibility of supporting existence, and the external want of the physical means of its support. In the polished creed of artificial society, a broken heart, and the want of fifty louis', constitute a similar assignable cause for despair. The suicide is shuddered over, interred;—we array ourselves for a ball, and wonder at his impatience of life. This is the case only with the higher classes; beggars, it seems, may die with impunity. We hear of their death, and hope

Digitized by Google

they have been driven to suicide only from poverty and despair. This is a very perverted state of feeling. Christianity, by filling our minds with the terrors of futurity, drives us to a sophisticated anxiety for life, under all its evils, and on any terms. Life! life is all we call for; we swallow it, find every drop poison, and thirst for more.

"There was nothing of this among the ancients. We exclaim against the cruelty of the Hindoos in exposing their infants to expire in baskets suspended from the trees; at the Indians, for leaving their decrepit parents to perish in the woods by famine or by wild beasts; at the Romans, for sending their sick slaves to perish in a desert island. But is there *cruelty* in all this? Could the sick, the aged, and the mutilated be permitted to speak the language of nature to us, they would probably say,—We are wretched, we are helpless! Our existence is loathsome to ourselves, and burthensome to you.

Digitized by Google

We stand before you an example of mortality, and yet the disgust and weariness which we inspire, deprives you of the benefit of the lesson,—'Deliver us, and deliver yourselves; our lingering existence is suffering to ourselves, and injury to you.—Death will obtain ease for both.'

"Thus they would speak, if they were allowed to speak as truth would urge them. Would we be injured if we listened to them, if we diminished the quantum of pain in life? And shall we shrink to hear such language from ourselves, when our hearts imperatively utter it to us in a tone that will neither be resisted nor misunderstood? I will not shrink, not another day—yes, one day more I will, Delphine, for I see you weep—and you weep too, M. De Viosmenil—cease—the tears of a man overcome me. *He wept*—I have seen his tears; but he wept to betray me to misery, and you weep to witness into what misery he has plunged me.

Digitized by Google

There is a great difference, but the sight of tears shed by men is horrible to me; I would rather live under the droppings of the Upas tree."

Madame St Maur and Viosmenil were astonished. From the moment of De Courcy's departure she had never mentioned his name—never alluded to him directly or indirectly; now she spoke of him—spoke plainly of him. They did not know what to make of it; but each argued internally according to their different conceptions. Madame St Maur imagined that Zaira was resolved on life, because she spoke of her lover; Viosmenil believed that the mention of his name could be drawn from her heart only in its last agonies. Madame St Maur triumphed finally in the full pride of conviction, for as she was retiring, Zaira said to her, "If I could but once utter his name—if I could heave from the bottom of my heart the weight that lies there, I might feel relief. I will try to mingle his name

Digitized by Google

in my prayers, for I pray still," said she, grasping the hand of Delphine in hers, and enforcing the pressure to convince her of the truth of her assertion; "and perhaps God may grant me the grace to have his name the last I utter." Madame St Maur went away quite satisfied; she was sure that no woman who could pray for a man, was in the least danger of dying of a broken heart. She remembered the times of the League, when it was thus customary to mingle passion and devotion, and to have the portraits of the Virgin and the saints, in the margin of their illuminated missals, taken and coloured and arrayed after the originals of their lovers—so, Madame St Maur was contented after the manner of French women—And, moreover, she remembered Zaira's promise not to destroy herself that night; and Madame St Maur was a woman to be comforted with the mention of a night's interposition between

Digitized by Google

her and any calamity she dreaded—a night had a very long sound to her.

Zaira was now alone—it was very late—she felt exhausted—her eyes wandered over many books, and she felt that in many books there was weariness. She rested on the Bible, and accidentally opened on the thirty-second chapter of the prophesies of Ezekiel—that tremendous chapter, before the language of whose denunciatory vengeance, and unsparing desolation, all other menaces, national or individual, flit away, as the leaf before the gale, or as the small dust of the balance. She read on, with feelings at first stupified with terror, and then solemnized by the difference of the threatened desolation of the world, and the desolation of a single heart.—She read on, "Wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, her and the daughters of the famous nations * * * Whom dost thou pass in beauty?—Go down"—

Digitized by Google

Awful reply to all human pretensions struggling for exemption from mortality, whether for glory as a nation, or for eminence as an individual.—She read on, "Assur is there, and all her company, * * all of them slain, fallen by the sword, whose graves are set in the sides of the pit; and her company is round about her grave, all of *them* slain, fallen by the sword, *which* caused terror in the land of the living.—There is Elam, and all her multitude round about her grave, &c. &c. They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain, with all her multitude, &c. &c.—There is Meshech Tubal, and all her multitude, &c. &c. &c. —There is Edom, her kings, and all her princes, &c.—There be the princes of the north all of them, and all the Zidonians which are gone down with the slain, &c. &c. &c. Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, even Pharaoh, and all his army, slain by

Digitized by Google

the sword, saith the Lord God, for I have caused my terror in the land of the living." Zaira read these tremendous words—words ill suited to the present state of her mind. "*There* is all that is great on earth," she cried, "and shall I hesitate to follow? Mighty nations are there, and shall I, an individual, tremble to meet them? The heathen Elysium presents but a barren group; there is not one with whom I could hold society. The Christian heaven calls me to a brighter company; *there* are no sciolists—no warriors tilting in the dusk; there are the "spirits of just men made perfect"—there are those whom we loved and lost on earth, and shall I be there?" As she uttered these words, she felt such a sudden elation of spirits—such a rush of blood through her frame, that for a moment she was raised to a kind of supernatural madness. She looked round for some omen—some testimony of divine interference accordant to the tone of her

Digitized by Google

mind, and which it was sufficiently intoxicated almost to demand. She remembered (for though her imagination was inebriated, her intellects were unimpaired)—she remembered the extraordinary tale told by Lord Herbert of Cherbury of himself.

When he had finished his deistical work, he was so convinced of its truth, and so anxious for a testimony of the divine approbation, that he knelt down before an open window, and implored of God to give him some sensible sign that he approved of this work. He describes afterwards a sound wholly unearthly, something between music and the murmur of the wind, entering his apartment, diffusing itself through it and gradually sinking away.

For a moment, Zaira almost expected such an omen as this. Before the moment had expired, a sound deep and mournful struck on her ear; it was evidently in the apartment. She paused; this incident restored her to recollection; she was not weak

Digitized by Google

enough to believe it supernatural. It was a string of her harp that had broken; the omen ceased to affect her imagination, but it struck on her heart. The art that she had so loved and embellished, seemed to warn her by its dying, melancholy sound. It seemed to say, "Your hand will never touch these strings again; take then farewell in this last vibration."—"Some say the genius thus cries, *come!*"

Then crowded on her mind the awful story of that night in Alexandria, when the sound of subterranean music and revelry, passing out towards *the enemy's camp*, was heard by those who were feasting with Antony and Cleopatra at their last banquet, reminding them terribly of the contrasted splendour of their former destiny, and the gloom of that which was approaching. Then followed the tremendous Μεταβαίνωμεθά ἐντευθεν, of the Jewish history, when God left them for ever; when * *Ichabod* was pro-

---

i. e. The glory is departed.

Digitized by Google

nounced by the voice of the eternal Judge, and the glory of their hierarchy and their temple departed from them for ever.

"I come then," said Zaira; "my steps already tremble on the verge of mortality—but if they tremble it is not from fear. One recollection alone (which may perhaps survive beyond it,) makes them faulter. My God! may I in this last hour, when I need all your mercy for myself, may I dare to implore it for another? His image lies at the bottom of my heart. Alas! I feel at this moment that only the influence of that name could suggest a prayer to me; I want the power to utter one for myself!"

She sunk on her knees; she buried her head in the sofa before which she knelt; her arms were flung desperately over her head; her figure was prostrated almost on the ground. She tried to raise her heart to God; her heart returned the thrilling answer, "You will soon know all." She re-

Digitized by Google

mained long in this attitude; she knew not how long.

Something that was not sleep came over her as she lay thus. It certainly was not sleep; her faculties were not suspended. A still, but conscious sensation, pervaded her; a dull twilight gathered round her. It broke, and the day of judgment glared on her trance. It seemed like a dream, but it was reality to the sufferer.

She started from sleep, as she imagined, and saw the heavens on fire, and the earth passing away as a scroll. Myriads on myriads of human beings glanced and disappeared before her, like bubbles sparkling and bursting in the dash of a cataract; all hurrying on, on, on, as the tide of time bore its tribute to the ocean of eternity. Earth was gone, there was no place to stand on, nothing to look up to; above, below, around, all was darkness illimitable, intangible, unsubstantial,—an ocean, whose dark waves

Digitized by Google

dashed against nothing. Suddenly a flash of lightning burst on the gloom; a flash that appeared to tear open heaven up to the throne of God. She called on darkness to shelter her in vain; she called on the mountains to fall on her, but the mountains were no more; she grovelled to the centre in her spirit, but from the centre she beheld the Son of God coming in glory and in judgment. Millions, an infinity of millions, stood bright and shivering before him, as the blaze of His descending glory gleamed on their huddled shadows. Among millions I shall be concealed, she felt; but the eye of the Judge was fixed on her alone; the trumpet sounded, but its tone thundered in her ear alone; the book was opened, but her name was on the page alone. None but a disembodied spirit could endure this agony; she became insensible.

The dream changed its imagery; she seemed to see creation as after judgment—

Digitized by Google

darkness and a wreck—desolation and nothingness—a land of shadows, where the light was as darkness—a place on which the Almighty had stretched out "the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness." There was no sun—a pallid and clouded gloom, like the spectre of departed light—there was no earth—the elements were confused and chaotic—masses of disorganized matter came dashing against each other, whirled along in a tide of ruin. Dark, formless, and void was every thing,—

> ——————— "A wild abyss,
> The womb of nature, and perhaps her grave.
> ——————————The throne
> Of Chaos, and his dark pavilion spread
> Wide on the wasteful deep."——

She felt herself borne along in this whirl of nothingness; this tide without a wave and without a shore. Suddenly a light gleamed on her as she floated on. It came from an eminence, where stood a female

Digitized by Google

form, a well-remembered form, though seen but once before, and then also in a dream; the pale calm countenance had lost its mortal expression. The figure leaned on a luminous cross, from which the light emanated, and which bore a bright inscription—Εν τουτω νικα. She attempted to grasp it, but was borne away.

During this dream, her cries were so loud and incessant as to alarm Madame St Maur, who was in an adjoining room, and who had not yet retired to rest. She rushed to her apartment, and found her stretched on the floor in convulsions. The physicians who were sent for pronounced her life, or her reason, or both, in danger. Her state continued doubtful for many days; but grief, the only malady which makes the sufferer wish for death, is, of all others, the least mortal. She recovered, but to a state of miserable debility; she was forbid even to speak, an injunction she showed no wish to disobey. By the utmost submis-

Digitized by Google

sion to her medical attendants, she seemed to indicate a wish for life.

Madame St Maur communicated this observation to Viosmenil with great delight; they drew different conclusions from it, however. Madame St Maur believed she was repelled from her purpose by the terrors of the vision. Viosmenil concluded she had some ulterior object, in which the image of De Courcy——

One night, while Madame St Maur sat by her bedside, she observed her lips moving as if they formed sounds which she had not strength to utter. Madame St Maur softly enquired if she wished for any thing?

"I am calculating," said Zaira, in a faint but distinct voice,—"I am calculating, if I live, how soon I may be able to reach Ireland."

Madame St Maur, believing this to be raving, made no answer; but the next morning, speechless with astonishment, she

Digitized by Google

heard Zaira calmly declare her resolution, the moment her health enabled her, to return to Ireland.

"I am not superstitious," said she, laying her cold hand on Madame St Maur's; "the habits of my life would rather justify a contrary conclusion—nor do I feel that my intellects have been impaired by the blow that has crushed my heart—but a power, which I cannot resist, appears to summon me to this step—a voice calls me from this which I dare not disobey. Ever since that night," she continued, lowering her voice, and a visible shudder agitating her frame, "that form has never quitted me—it is standing beside me now. When you are near me, it shifts its place; but it does not disappear. When you are gone, it returns, and stands before me. I know that form well, though I never saw it in life; it is the form of that Irish girl for whom I was deserted. I was deserted soon myself. I see her form for ever; it

Digitized by Google

bears no longer a hostile expression; with gentle but solemn gesture, it wafts me home. The cross to which it points is fixed on the shore I remember well, the shore of Ireland; there its light is shed, and there its light invites me. Something is to be done or suffered there; what it is I know not, but I feel I am summoned there. There I drew my first breath, there I first beheld him, there perhaps"——

She was too much exhausted to continue the conversation; but, some days afterwards, Madame St Maur, who had almost forgot the subject, was astonished at seeing Zaira's domestics making preparations for a journey. This phenomenon opened her eyes at once. Madame St Maur, with all her affection and good sense, was more liable to access through the channel of the senses than any other. She certainly never could have been forced by any evidence, but the evidence of her senses, to believe that one who might live in Paris would

Digitized by Google

voluntarily go to Dublin; but the evidence was irresistible, Zaira's servants were packing her trunks in the hall.

She went with her astonishment and despair (as on all great emergencies she was wont) first to Viosmenil; then, as her last resource, she went to argue the point, after the manner of Frenchwomen, with Zaira. The fixt expression of calm despair in Zaira's face awed and silenced her—she lost all her nationality in a moment, and became the candid, affectionate, intelligent being nature had formed her—she burst into tears, and this expression of feeling completely overcame Zaira.

"Where are you going then?" said Madame St Maur.

"I am going to Ireland, my affectionate friend," said Zaira, tenderly pressing her hands,—"to Ireland, where my life and my misery both began, and where both, perhaps, are to be terminated. I feel that my destiny is to be fulfilled there; it

Digitized by Google

will be better that I should perish by his hand, than by my own."

She saw the change in Madame St Maur's countenance at these ominous words, and she hastened to add, "My dear friend, my life is misery; I am dying by inches, dying by despair. The cruellest enemy I have on earth would relent at the tortures I suffer, if he could behold them. The terrors of futurity have been disclosed to me, yet they in all their terrors struggle with his image in vain. It would be the greatest mercy I could experience, if he would plunge a knife into my heart this moment. I think I could draw out the blade, dyed in my heart's blood, and kiss it, if his hand placed it there. You know I have almost with a superstitious dread shrunk from mentioning his name. Could I have uttered it, it would have been heaving a mountain from my heart; shut up there, it burned and preyed on my vitals. In addition to this feeling, which is consuming me in silence, another—a more

Digitized by Google

awful one, calls me to the last struggle of my varied life. I cannot express to you, Delphine, that secret sense which the unfortunate have, and by which they hold communication with the invisible world; they are so near the grave that they can hear and understand the language which no mortal but themselves can bear—I feel, but never can express that immortal intelligence."

Madame St Maur would have reasoned, but she felt the effort useless; and she had that sense of the superiority of Zaira's intellectual character, which not even grief, sophistry, superstition, and misplaced passion, could ever diminish. She could only weep, and silently leave her to seek for consolation from Viosmenil, though she felt that even his masculine mind shrunk from encountering with Zaira's. Some days elapsed; the preparations went on silently, but certainly. Viosmenil and Madame St Maur only looked at each other as they be-

Digitized by Google

held them; then they began to talk of the event as hourly probable; and lastly, they felt some comfort in speaking of it, for whatever brings exalted minds to the level of lower ones, furnishes a kind of consolation to our perverted natures. They wondered, shrugged their shoulders, and acknowledged to each other tacitly, that Zaira, whom they had hitherto beheld as a superior being, was reduced completely to the level of mortality. Viosmenil and Madame St Maur were affectionate friends, but still they were human creatures; they would have laid down their lives for Zaira, but they could not lay down their natures. As a last resource, the very night before her departure Viosmenil ventured to talk the language of the world; he knew that Zaira had been a woman who cherished a keen sensibility of popular applause, and of the popular sentiment concerning her; she was proud of the rare union of a spotless character and resplendent talents. Viosme-

Digitized by Google

nil spoke of this, and how much would be lost by this wild pursuit of a phantom of the imagination—by this spendthrift waste of all the treasures of existence at the feet a worthless boy, who trampled on them, and turned again to rend her. He said repeatedly, "What will the world think?"—an argument of mighty weight—talismanic words, of which the strongest spirits have at times felt the operation. Zaira was silent for some time; at last she said, "If misfortunes are made the subjects of reproach, what mortal can be free? Are those objects which nature points out to us as the centre of our affections, more likely to secure our happiness than the objects suggested by our hearts? As a wife, or a mother, might I not have been rendered as miserable by the cruelty, the neglect, or the errors of a husband or a child, as I have been by *him*? The only difference is, that in the one case, the cause of our sufferings is imposed by necessity, and in the other, by choice. This

Digitized by Google

difference is very immaterial to the sufferer —*we may cease to reproach our own hearts, when they cause us no more misery than is hourly inflicted by life.*"

These were the last words Madame St Maur and Viosmenil ever heard from Zaira. They wept at parting with her, but the near prospect of their own happiness assisted to dry their tears. They married, and, by aid of good sense, good tempers, much esteem for each other, some literary taste, and an easy fortune, they became such adepts in moral chemistry, as actually to extract comfort from life!!!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

——et Tyrios desertâ quærere terrâ.

VIRGIL.

ZAIRA arrived in Ireland;—what a different arrival from her first, when, as De Courcy was accustomed to say, she made her *avatar* there! It was September when she landed; the fading light and shortening days were now congenial to her feelings, and as she sat on the deck, and viewed the shore through the dim twilight of a hazy evening, that made every thing appear pale, cold, and colourless, she felt as if she was approaching the shores of the "undiscovered country"—"the land of shadows," where all things are forgotten.

Digitized by Google

She took a house at a little distance from Dublin, under an assumed name, saw no society, and never appeared in public. She was soon discovered, however, and the conductors of some charitable institution waited on her to intreat her to exert her talents at some concert or play that was to be performed for its benefit. This application appeared to give her great agony;—she was unable, for a considerable time, to return an answer. At length she said,—"I would assist those unhappy persons with the sacrifice of half my fortune sooner than appear in public again." The persons who conducted the charity, distressed by the effect of their application, retired. She sent a liberal donation, and immediately changed her residence, to escape similar persecutions. Her life was very monotonous, but calm. There was a dull weight on her senses and her faculties, an obtuse sense of pain never very excruciating, but never for a moment remitting. She said to herself

Digitized by Google

perpetually,—"It will soon be over, it will soon cease." When we thus try to impose on ourselves, when we talk to ourselves as to another whom we try to pacify, the imposition is not more vain than it is melancholy. Still a sense of fatality, connected with her return to Ireland, operated at the bottom of her heart. She was like one of those in ancient times who is directed to visit an oracle, and who sits down before the doors of the temple till they unclose, and there, overcome by grief and weariness, falls asleep. She could have said, with Lee's unfortunate hero, to the prophet Tiresias—

> "Therefore instruct us what remains *to* do,
> *Or suffer*—for I feel a sleep like death
> Upon me, and I long to be at rest."

This state, which mentions *doing* and *suffering* in the same breath, and almost as the same thing, which expects no relief

Digitized by Google

from fortitude, passive or active, is a fine image of a mind broken down by grief.

* * * * *

She walked incessantly during the day; she said it was to deaden the sense of inward pain; perhaps it was because she hoped somewhere to meet De Courcy. She did see *him* sometimes; she saw *his figure* at a distance; she trod with frantic fondness where his shadow had passed, but when she approached him, the beating of her heart amounted almost to suffocation. She shuddered,—she paused; and shocked at this public exposure of her weakness, she was compelled to grasp the rails of a house for support till he was out of sight. It was singular enough, that, during this period, she bore the loathsome, horrible spectacles of mendicity, misery, and vice, with which the streets of Dublin are almost putrid, with a kind of wretched patience almost

Digitized by Google

approaching to satisfaction. The sight of physical suffering is at once a balance and consolation to the victim of internal pain. Misery is certainly very misanthropic in its simple operations.

The beautiful buildings of the city, its bay, its mountains—she never looked on them now;—she walked constantly through the streets—there was enough there to feed her mood. The perpetual spectacle of intoxication that occurred at every step, seemed to shock or terrify her no longer. Misery seeks misery every where, from the irresistible desire for comparison or analysis. When she saw these wretched objects raving or grovelling in the mire, she said,—"Life is insupportable without some species of intoxication; I wish I could share the delirium of those wretches, without their brutalizing degradation. The lowest class of life seeks physical intoxication to forget its miseries; the higher seeks mental intoxication. The highest class of all tries

Digitized by Google

the desperate intoxication of the heart, irrecoverable and incureable; whose delirium is "sweet madness,"—whose waking is "despair."

Zaira's knowledge or memory worked with terrible perverted industry in aid of the false theory of predominant misery. Spencer, she thought, tells of the miserable inhabitants of Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth, that they take snuff to "beget fresh spirits." The inhabitants of the Isles of the South-Sea produce this excitation by gliding along the surf in their light canoes; and some writers tell us of a more savage people, who try to attain it by standing on their heads till they arrive at stupefaction. How enviable!—Such were the miserable wanderings of a mind broke from its moorings, and driving before that storm which perhaps no human mind can ride out without "tackle torn," inglorious, dismasted, and disarrayed. When she saw the crowds of beggars that pollute and infest the streets of the "beau-

Digitized by Google

tiful city," the same perverted feeling ministered fuel to the fire that was consuming her. Mendicity, she thought with herself, is always the concomitant of a certain religion—it abounds to loathsomeness in countries professedly Catholic—it is diminished in England under the influence of the established religion, and almost disappears under that of Presbyterianism in Scotland. To what is this vast increase or diminution of human misery, this fluctuation of the vast tide of calamity, to be ascribed?—Merely to climate, to a cause in which man has no share. The religion of the south of Europe is universally Catholic, that of the north generally Protestant; this must be purely physical. Well, then, the religion of men depends on their climate, and on their religion depends a large portion of their external comforts, of their human destiny, which is, doubtless, connected with their future and immortal one; and all this is brought about by their being natives of a

Digitized by Google

certain climate. Had I been born in another country, had other causes operated on my constitution and my feelings, what a different being might I have been!

Thus she strengthened herself in bad metaphysics, and worse sentiment. A singular contrast took place, (perceptibly to herself,) between her sensibility of objects that give pleasure, and of objects that give pain. She had formerly lived among every object that could exalt the mind, and delight the senses; her heart favoured her creed of optimism; her life was passed in a kind of refined and dignified voluptuousness. Now she sought out the spectacle of wretchedness every where with anxious and mischievous avidity. She left the fair mountain to batten on the moor.

On her arrival in Dublin the preceding spring, she had been much delighted by the picturesque situation and architectural beauty of the city. Now, her sentiments were changed, and her senses appeared

Digitized by Google

changed along with them; undoubtedly the music of the soul is most exquisite only when both are in harmony. A friend reminded her of the admiration with which the beauty of the city impressed her a few months before.

"Its beauty continues," said Zaira, "but it is the frightful lifeless beauty of a corse; and the magnificent architecture of its public buildings seems like the skeleton of some gigantic frame, which the inhabiting spirit has deserted; like the vast structure of the bones of the Behemoth, which has ceased to live for ages, and around whose remains modern gazers fearfully creep and stare. We can bear the ruins of a city long deserted by human inhabitants, but it is awful to observe the inhabitants stealing from a city whose grandeur they can no longer support. Thus the Dauphin (father of Louis XVI.) saw with his dying eyes the furniture thrown from the windows into the court of the castle where he lay, from

Digitized by Google

the impatience of the attendants to quit it the moment he expired. I walk through the streets of this fine city—I pause at the gate of its superb university—I see a few sizars and porters lounging there—I ask where are the 'illustrious men and ingenuous youths,' whom the *eloquent patriot* greeted in other times?—Its ingenuous youth are all gone to Oxford, or Cambridge, and the day might be marked with a cretic note, when a gown with a gold, or even a silver tassel, is seen a *purpureus pannus* amid the beggary of its deserted walls.

"Opposite to it I behold a building which would have embellished Athens in the purest days of its architectural pride—It was the Senate-house of Ireland—It is now *the Bank*; and along those steps, worthy of a temple of Minerva or of Jupiter, the inhabitants of this impoverished city, without trade and without wealth, are crawling to pay bills; and among those

Digitized by Google

splendid passages which once echoed to the eloquence of a Flood, a Grattan, a Foster, and a Plunkett, is heard the jargon of runners and tellers; and in that splendid apartment of the House of Peers still hung with the triumphs of William, the directors meet to ascertain dividends, and strike a bonus. I seek the residences of the nobility in this beautiful city; they are easily pointed out; their altered destination is enough to mark them. The palace of the Duke of Leinster (the only Duke in Ireland) belongs to the Dublin Academy; the mansion of the Powerscourt family has become the station of the Stamp-office; the residence of Lord Glerawly has been levelled for the erection of a catholic chapel; that of the Cowper family has been purchased by the trustees of a charter-school; and the splendid modern house of Lord Aldborough (built within twenty years) is become the seat of the seminary of Profes-

Digitized by Google

sor Feinagle. Woe to the land where the mansions of her nobility have become the receptacles of office, or the palaces of pedagogues!"

Whether these observations are just or not, it is certain they did not occur to Zaira on her former arrival in Dublin. With the Old Marquis in Gil Blas, perhaps, she was beginning to suspect that even the peaches of the latter time were degenerating. It is very terrible when grief, by destroying our sensibility, both of nature and art, deprives us of those auxiliaries against its power of which it has reduced us to the utmost need. It is like sending one to carry on war in a country which the enemy has already wasted with fire and sword before us.

One day she wandered to a very obscure part, called Swift's-alley; there is a dissenting meeting-house there. The sight of it awoke many recollections in her mind;—her heart grew full, and she paused in the

Digitized by Google

vain hope of being relieved by tears. An old woman who observed her, offered her a seat in her humble dwelling; she was involuntarily interested by that beautiful figure which could interest every heart but De Coucy's. She believed her ill. The poor, who know little but of physical sufferings, are apt to ascribe all signs of emotion to the one cause, they seldom suspect one of grief. Zaira accepted the offer; and with the remains of her former sweetness, made some inquiries about her hostess. She was a very old woman, nearly eighty years old, upwards of sixty of which had been passed in her present abode, a small building close to the meeting-house; she had a small pittance for keeping the keys of it, and seeing that it was cleansed and aired on the day of public worship. She had outlived her immediate relations, and perhaps forgotten her remote descendants; no one ever came to see her, nor did she perhaps wish for it, and her infirmities prevented her from

Digitized by Google

going abroad. Her room contained a chair, a bed, a table, Bunyan's Holy War, and a Bible. The latter she could no longer read, so that her habitation seemed as sterile as her existence. This hermitage, in a populous city, certainly presents a singular image. There have been persons who became enamoured of solitude, because it was embellished by the exquisite attractions of nature; this, one may say, is a sensuality so refined as almost to approach intellectual pleasure. It is a glorified body, whose sensibilities are no longer physical or impure. But there was nothing of this kind here; before, around, and above the dwelling of this woman, rose high and heavy walls of the darkest stone. The sun could so seldom shine on the narrow pavement before her door, that there was no verdure forcing its way between the stones—a few withered squalid blades of grass only, that seemed as if they had mistaken the place for a tombstone, there they grew like the forbidden

Digitized by Google

enjoyments of life, struggling for their abode in a heart devoted to religion. The building itself, the only object she saw throughout the day, had the rigidity of Calvinism in every feature of it; it stood there like the substantial image of an abstract religion, without grace or embellishment, imparting its own sternness to the heart and the manners.

Zaira thought of the decorative splendour of the churches on the continent; and she remembered the rebuke of Jesus to the Pharisee,—"Mine head with oil thou did'st not anoint; thou gavest me no water," &c. Would it not have been better if she had reflected,—"He dwelleth not in temples made by hands."——

"Gorgeous—yet love I not this pomp of prayer,"

says one of our first poets. Certainly in churches, architectural magnificence and luxurious embellishment are rather a sacri-

Digitized by Google

fice to the pride of man than to the glory of God, and the worshipper seems to come there rather to boast of what he has done for the Deity, than to shew what the Deity has done for him.

Zaira was withdrawn from her musings by the talking (for it could not be called conversation) of the old woman. "She had remembered better days," she said,—"the days of famous preachers, long dead, when the meeting-house was so crowded, that there was not room for half that came to hear the Word of Life; when there was a talk about forty years ago of *enlarging* it," (and as she spoke she stretched out her withered arms, as if the idea was too vast for her mind, unless she relieved it by a corresponding gesture.)—"Now," she said, "things are very different." And to hear her, one would imagine that the salvation of all mankind were dependent on the fullness of the congregation at an obscure meeting-house in Dublin. In her mind,

Digitized by Google

a member of that meeting, and a Christian, were evidently synonimous terms, and inseparable ideas. Zaira enquired a little further, and learned, that at the time when the meeting was so much crowded, her fees had been very considerable. "But people have all left off going the right way," said the old woman. This was a wretched discovery; it is horrid to find littleness of soul in the dying, or in those who make religious pretensions, whom we nearly identify with the former. They both belong, in our minds, to another world.

This woman revived in Zaira's memory the idea of the old nun in the convent near Paris. There was the same sterility, vacancy, and uniformity in their characters. A person unacquainted with religious distinctions, would scarce have known one from the other; yet, in one respect, they were antipodes to each other—Catholicism and Calvinism placed an immeasurable distance between them. Had either heard of

Digitized by Google

the other, she would have considered her, as a being devoted to the devil and his angels, placed under the concentrated and unmitigable wrath of the Almighty for ever and ever. Singular mixture of inanity and ferocity in the same mind!

Zaira then recollected a door-keeper at one of the foreign theatres; he was so old that he was called the patriarch, and highly amusing from the importance he attached to his situation. To hear him "magnify his office," one would think him an apostle, and that the duties of the drama were quite on a level with the duties of religion. He remembered the times of Senesino, Farinelli, Faustina, Cuzzoni, &c.; and it was singular enough, that, in speaking of them, and of the crowded houses assembled to hear them, he used exactly the same language that the humble portress of Swift's Alley Meeting-house did, when recalling the departed glories of former days. Their sentences were constructed and expressed

Digitized by Google

exactly in the same style of deliberate enthusiasm. The interests of the stage and the preaching of the gospel made the only difference between them.

This coincidence, that might have suggested, to a mind more happily disposed, a useful speculation, operated very differently on Zaira's. She compared the different characters and situations, and she said to herself, "there is no difference, but that of habit." When she once entered on this subject, she sunk deeper and deeper, plunging amid billows that came

"Booming and breaking o'er her sinking head."

She imagined there must be rest at the bottom—it was the rest of a sunk wreck, over which a thousand storms have passed, and the ocean pours its waves in fathomless silence. She thought, and was worse for every thought that passed through her mind. There is an atrophy of the soul, as

Digitized by Google

well as of the body, and the mind when diseased can convert the most wholesome nutriment into actual poison.

That evening while pursuing her usual restless walk, (more like the wanderings of an "unlaid spirit," than the activity of a human being), she felt more misery than usual. She gave alms to the miserable objects that obstructed her path in every direction; she felt for the first time that the action was quite mechanical, she had no pleasure from it now. This sensation increased her wretchedness greatly; she began to feel that she was losing the only feeling that made life supportable. How little she knew of the state of her heart at that moment! It is said in Ulloa's Voyages, that, in the severest climate of North America, the spirits were frozen through the bottle—they were all ice; but the spirit retreating to the centre, formed a column of actual fire, that burned the lips that

Digitized by Google

tasted them. Zaira's heart was frozen thus; the external surface was hard and cold, but the centre contained one burning drop. De Courcy's image glowed there still more strongly from the intensity of the surrounding and encroaching cold.

She was now near Island-bridge, when a heavy shower drove her (rather from consideration for her servant than herself) to seek for shelter. She went into a small shop, where was a great appearance of neatness and industry. The frequent calls of customers, and the pleased assiduity of the shopkeeper, gave token that things were going on prosperously. In a back room his wife was instructing her children; and the eager, happy voice of childhood, proud of newly-acquired intelligence, sounded delightfully in the ear. It gave no pleasure to *her*—she trembled at the sight of happiness—she felt as Adam did, perhaps, when, on the evening of his expulsion from Paradise, he might have wandered near its bo-

Digitized by Google

loved limits, and drank the fragrance of its forbidden sweets, wafted to him by airs he must never breathe again; then looking up, saw the flaming sword of exclusion turning every way against him.

In a few moments, the officious, but not servile attentions of the man forced themselves on her notice. She did not recognise him, till at last, unable to struggle any longer with the fullness of his heart, he told her he was the person whom she had assisted with such generosity before she quitted Ireland; that her liberality had enabled him to recommence business, in which he was succeeding so well, that, as he said with Irish enthusiasm, "he believed there was a blessing on all she did."

At these words, which went too near her heart, she fixed her eyes on him with a look of such ghastly incredulity, that the man paused, fearful he had offended, though not understanding how. She was silent; and he resumed the subject in a lower voice.

Digitized by Google

He hoped that the young gentleman, who was the means of introducing him and his distress to her notice, was well and happy. This was too much. Zaira struggled in vain to answer him. The man then found out that something (he knew not what) was wrong, and became silent, "though it was pain and grief to him."

Zaira rose to depart, and then he could contain no longer; he followed her to the door with blessings and thanks, and continued them till she was out of sight. These blessings, these prayers for our happiness and long life, are terrible to those who feel life a curse, and happiness an impossibility. Language, black with execration and horror, would be less painful to them. She hurried on to escape the insult of gratitude, and she felt as if she was doomed to go on, like Ladurlad, with "a fire in her heart and a fire in her brain," condemned to do good without a share in it herself,—blessing, but unblessed.

Digitized by Google

Again compelled to stop by the violence of the weather, an autumnal storm of wind and rain, she took shelter in a cabin, and directed her servant to go forward, and send the carriage for her, that she might "return home." Home!—what a word for the unhappy to use—a place where they meet nothing but that desolate heart which they brought out with them. In a few minutes her attention was drawn to an obscure corner of the cabin by groans that issued from it at long intervals. It was so dark, that it was long before she discovered there what had been a bed, on which was stretched something squalid, hagard, spent, and moaning.

"It is a poor creature," said the woman who owned the cabin, "that came in here for a night's lodging—bytimes I think she is only *half and half*, and she is not *expected* now, any how."

Zaira approached the bed; and to her inexpressible horror recognized in the sunk,

Digitized by Google

but wild features, the feeble, but singularly-modulated voice of the dying object, those of the madwoman whom she had thrice before encountered under circumstances so extraordinary. The woman appeared to recognise her too; she raised her hollow and livid looks to Zaira.

"Oh, my eyes are dim!" said she, "but I know you well—and are you come at last—come to hear the secret none knows but me—come to close the eyes of your——"

And she stretched out her withered arms to Zaira. Zaira recoiled with an impulse she could not account for; she had never before thus shrunk from wretchedness and death. She was even hastening from the cabin, when the maniac, sitting up in her bed, called out to the woman to detain her.

"Stop her!" she cried, in a voice hollow but piercing; "bid her stop, if she would shun the curse of——"

Digitized by Google

"Of whom?" cried Zaira.

"*Of her mother!*" said the maniac, sinking back on her bed, and extending her clasped hands towards Zaira.

The latter approached the bed, trembling and subdued; her former recollections suggested the terrible possibility that this intelligence was true.

"Tell me," said the old woman, "are you not Irish by birth? Are you *not* the daughter of—of—, in the county of Fermanagh? And tell me the truth, for I am passing fast."

"I am," said Zaira.

"Then I am your mother—though when I saw you before I had not the power to tell you so."

"My mother!—and in this hovel, and in these rags—Oh, merciful Heaven!"

"Ay, Heaven is merciful, or I would not be spared to tell you even this."

"Oh, let me remove you from this wretched place."

Digitized by Google

"Hush!" said her mother, raising her withered hand; "what matters it to a soul going to judgment, whether it parts from straw or from down?—Listen to me. You had a child?"

"I had."

"Well, that child is still alive, and I can tell you where."

"Oh, speak, for God's sake, speak!"

"Not a word—not another word to-night, if the world was kneeling there. To-night *I must make my soul*,* and that's enough for a parting sinner to have to do."

No supplication, no adjuration of Zaira's agony was powerful enough to extort another syllable from her mother, beyond the bare permission to see her the next evening, if she lived.

"Oh, you will, you must live!" said

* *i. e.* Perform my religious duties.

Digitized by Google

Zaira, as she quitted the hovel, in emotion unutterable.

To explain this interview, it will be necessary to lay before the reader, the letter which it was mentioned Zaira wrote to Madame St Maur, on her *first* arrival in Ireland, and which contained the particulars of her former life. After stating the agitation with which she revisited Ireland, the emotion with which she beheld the sea that bore her, and listened to the breeze that wafted her there; she adds, "it is the privilege of poetry and of grief alike to invest inanimate things with consciousness. Joy, full of itself, needs no sympathy from external things. To the happy every day is bright. But grief, like superstition, makes even the physical creation populous, and converts every object into an agent of consolation or of reproach.

"When in the morning we came within sight of the bay,—when I got on deck, and saw the blue mountains of my country

Digitized by Google

bright on the left, and the bay, with its sweeping shores, and the city shrouded in the western mist, marking the horizon with its thin grey line, that trembled on the vapoury skirts of the morning,—when I felt what none but those who had left it long, and who perhaps return to find suffering not respited, but renewed, can feel, I clasped my hands on my heart; I almost thought its beatings would betray me.—I tried to utter some prayers, but I felt that my lips moved without articulating. The ocean lay as calm around me as if it had never borne the weight of suffering on its waves. The joy of the passengers, the short technical answers of the sailors, and the still colder language of the captain, who answered every question as if the progress of the elements had never affected human happiness or suffering, made a strange contrast to all I felt. Strange indifference, that is produced by a constant intercourse with the most awful phenomena! Thus, the more physical our existence is, the more

Digitized by Google

tranquillity it enjoys; it is intellect alone that is always agitated, and almost always by pain. Singular awardment, whether it be the result of inconsistency or of deliberation—whether it proceed from an intelligent or unintelligent cause! But from whatever source insensibility arises, how enviable does it seem to those who suffer? Thus, those who witness the Falls of Niagara are stunned by a crash that seems capable of uprooting nature; while those who dwell near it, deafened by the habitual roar, soon lose all impression; and here alone, dear Delphine, have I courage to relate the events of my former life to you. We have the same dread to retrace misfortune that we have to expose a wound; but we have more reason, for it is the wounds of the mind alone that are exempt from ever closing.

"Even here, I hesitate to begin to tell what I have been. Misfortune always seems to females like disgrace. I am, what none of my continental friends but you

Digitized by Google

know, a native of Ireland.—I am the illegitimate daughter of a man of fortune in the west of Ireland, whose least error, perhaps, was his being the parent of a number of unfortunate nameless beings, none of whom he acknowledged or noticed but me. The singular beauty of my mother, I have heard, entitled me to this distinction. She possessed more influence over him than any other of his temporary favourites, and might have retained it but for a singular circumstance. Though she had sacrificed all that is valuable in the female character, she cherished a strong devotion for the catholic religion, perhaps with a view of palliating her other errors, and was so outraged by my father's avowed profession of the most daring infidelity, that even when I was an infant she declared she would rather see me perish than brought up under the roof of a monster, who defied both heaven and hell. After several attempts to take me from my father, whose fondness to me probably grew from opposition, she

Digitized by Google

was detected in one, and after a dreadful altercation, she was driven from the house, with an injunction never again to be seen in the neighbourhood. I have heard, that as the servants forced her out, she broke from them, and, kneeling in the hall, poured on my father and me a curse, the most solemn, bitter, and wild that ever passed the lips of a human being. On one of us, at least, it was fulfilled. Perhaps no curse could be more effectually accomplished than by my being left with the parent I was. He was a man of intellectual powers superior to most I have known, a "scholar, and a ripe one;" but he pressed every power he possessed into the service of obdurate scepticism. He called himself a philosophical unbeliever, but he did not disdain to borrow the aid of sophistry, invective, sneer, cavil;—all the light as well as heavy armed troops were at his service, and he had a full command of them all. His rage for converts was beyond that of the Pharisees; his scepticism had made

Digitized by Google

him miserable, and, perhaps, he thought to communicate misery was to lessen it; his genius and eloquence in the evil cause were indeed enough to draw after him the third part of the host.

"My education, which, next to the dissemination of infidelity, was his principal object, was beyond what most women receive. I had teachers of every language, masters in every art, instructors in every science, and my father illustrating, condensing, and harmonizing every thing into one vast mass of intellectual discipline. I was taught to know every thing but the one thing needful; I was permitted to read every thing but the Bible. My father was not the fool who saith in his heart, 'There is no God;' but he had so many objections against his power, goodness, or wisdom, drawn either from the physical constitution of things, or from the state of man, and his knowledge was so various, his reasoning powers so strong, and his resources so exhaustless, that those who encountered him

Digitized by Google

were soon unequal to the task, and, weary of defending the attributes of the Deity against endless objections, were contented to compromise for His existence, which was generally allowed them; this, at least, was my case when I was permitted to reason with him. His wish to make me a prodigy in literature and the arts was rapidly fulfilling, as far as it could be fulfilled by a girl not fourteen. Singular and perversed ambition! In depriving me of heaven, he wished to multiply my ties to earth; and while he took away my birth-right, aggravated its value by the price he seemed anxious to give for it, as if one world could ever be a balance for the other. One dark cloud hung over me from the earliest period —one image haunted me from the commencement of my life,—it was that of my mother, whom the frightful tales of the servants still described as wandering about the house at night in stormy weather, and repeating her maledictions in a voice 'not

Digitized by Google

of this world.' Her disappearance, my total ignorance of her situation, or whether she was yet alive, and that terrible sensation so common in the imaginations of the Irish, of a being whom we believe not to be alive, yet know not to be dead—who holds a kind of hovering intermediate existence between both worlds, and combines the passions of human existence with the power of a spirit, all produced in me a species of indefinite feeling towards this awful being, that neither reason or change of situation has ever been able to remove.

"The mythology of all countries has admitted and favoured the existence of such, from Thomas of Ercildoun to Wordsworth's Lucy Gray. Perhaps the cause of such wild imagery exists in the very nature of the human mind, and its unknown relation to futurity. We have never trod the confines of human existence with feet that felt the landmark; of the boundaries of the fu-

Digitized by Google

ture world we know still less; and we are therefore compelled to admit the existence of beings, whose state, partaking of both, can at least be arrayed in the images borrowed from one, while the rest of its shadowy existence fades away in the impermeable gloom of the other. Perhaps the loathsome superstition of the vampire, and our representation of Death by his physical form, both have this origin. Those who said they saw my unhappy mother, described her as wandering near the house in the stormy twilight of a winter's evening.—She was meagre, ragged, and bloody, and they gave dark hints of my father's passions.

"Sometimes I have heard strange sounds under my window at night. Do not wonder at this superstition of infidelity;—the widest extremes have been found to meet at last, as the Spaniards, in sailing round the globe, first expressed their wonder, when, after long pursuing what they thought

Digitized by Google

a direct course, it brought them to the point from which they had set out. The vacillations of the human mind are incessant, and the strongest impulse, given in a direction contrary to our natural one, only makes us return again with augmented velocity. The human mind may be said naturally to gravitate towards religion. But I was allowed no choice.

"Among the talents which my father was most anxious to cultivate, and which nature developed earliest in me, were my extraordinary vocal powers and musical enthusiasm, which have been the cause of so much suffering, and so much celebrity to me. My father, liberal in every thing, was extravagant in the cultivation of this darling art, that may well be called 'the Poetry of the Sciences.' The first teachers were engaged, at an enormous expense, to attend at his remote residence; and among them was a young Italian, who had made a conspicuous *debut* on the foreign stages,

Digitized by Google

but whose voice, failing from disproportionate exertion, compelled him to adopt the profession of a teacher. Many things recommended him to my father; his musical skill was profound: even Frederic of Prussia would have found him no less invincible than he did Mara. His *camera voce* was still delightful, though he could no longer fill theatres. He was well acquainted with the literature of his own country; and, above all, he was an atheist, vehement and declamatory; though, by a singular, but not inexplicable contrast, he always carried about him a portrait of the Virgin, and always crossed himself when he heard a peal of thunder;—dreadful preceptor for a girl of fourteen to be consigned to, intoxicated with his delightful art, and incapable of being alarmed by his principles.

"My father (oh, what a father!) left me for hours alone with this man, to listen to his brilliant and seductive picture of Italy, a land of palaces and flowers, a land where

Digitized by Google

the luxuries of art were combined with classic memorials; and the relaxation of manners was alike favourable to the indolence of literary enjoyment, and the silent felicities of the heart.

"Let me hurry over this miserable period of my existence. We were married by a catholic priest, but our marriage was kept secret from my father; for though he professed himself master of a splendid patrimony in his native country, he still seemed fearful of my father's displeasure. After some time it was necessary to disclose it: I was about to become linked to society by more than one tie. Oh! that dreadful disclosure!—Fioretti quitted the house, and left me to make it alone. The undivided, unmitigated storm of my father's fury burst on me, and stunned me. He cursed me, he spurned me; and I have heard would have killed me, but for the interposition of the terrified but merciful female servants, whom, however, he forced,

Digitized by Google

to bear me, still insensible, from his house, and from his sight for ever!

"In his rage of malediction, he cursed me as a monster destitute of principle; yet he had taught me none; and had torn me when an infant from my knees, when he saw a domestic attempting to teach me to form a prayer. He cursed me for a wretch and fool, ignorant of the duties of life; yet he had taught me, and his example justified his instructions, that to obey our passions was the only rule of human life. He cursed my disobedience as a child; yet he had taught me, that the only tie between parent and child was a temporary convention formed by mutual interest, and dissoluble when that interest ceased to exist.

"An old woman, in compassion, sheltered me in her wretched hovel (but I was insensible of its wretchedness) till my husband was apprized of my having now no other abode. He came; and still I wonder how even youth and obstinate health

Digitized by Google

sustained my existence after that interview, which fully developed his motives and his character. After wasting hours in imprecations on me, whose bitterness was aggravated by the foreign language that used to be the vehicle of such different sentiments, till within the few last miserable hours, he left me, telling me, with a laugh more frightful than a curse, to be ready to accompany him in a few hours to the continent.

"I had no preparation to make. We set out on our melancholy journey to Dublin. He was silent the whole time, and this was like a relief to me; for early wretchedness is jealous of imaginary consolation, while confirmed misery rejects even real. I tried to reason myself into excuses for his disappointment, for his temper, for the vehemence of his national character; I tried to hope that my submission, my helplessness, and perhaps the exertion of the talent that he had cultivated and admired,

Digitized by Google

might at some future time procure me his compassion, if not his affection. I had ceased to love him, but it is hard to disbelieve the only source of protection that humanity affords us. I even hoped that his child —his child!—Ah, Heaven! how much less would I have suffered, had I been its grave before I was its parent!

"We arrived in Dublin; and he was expediting our departure, when I felt that to depart immediately was impossible; with difficulty I was allowed an attendant. My sufferings were very great; they gave me a great quantity of laudanum; I know not whether it is usual at such times, still less do I know what might have been its effect. I was insensible for many hours.

* * * *

"I asked for my child; it was hours before I could obtain an answer; the women about me wept. At length my husband,

Digitized by Google

the father of my child, told me, I never should see it more. 'Do you not think,' said he, talking himself by passion into a justification of his unnatural crime, 'that the incumbrance of a wife is sufficient? Must I have a screaming brat to remind me of my wretchedness every where?—You will never see it more—you must prepare yourself for another destiny.'

"I was insensible of all that he said afterwards. He had torn my child from me—a child from a mother of fifteen, dying to clasp to her heart a being almost like herself in helplessness and weakness. I would have forgiven him every thing—I would have worshipped him——I am unable to go on.

"A dismal light, like twilight, seemed to surround me for months—forms hovered around me, but I could not distinguish them—voices spoke to me, but I knew not what they meant—thoughts, too, were with me, of which I hardly comprehended the

Digitized by Google

depth or the darkness, but they suited my desperation—despair unenlightened by religion, unsustained by hope—they haunt me still—they have been with me in solitude and in crowds—you have witnessed them, and started at their effect, when even I believed I had forgotten them—forget them—yes, I might, I would—but they never forget me.

"No one heeded me, no one *comforted* me; and perhaps to this I owe my life and reason—the torturing of officious consolation would have irritated me to madness—I never had a gleam of recollection till the bright sun of Italy glared on me like unwelcome light on a feverish sleeper, waking him to pain. I was not allowed a long respite—I wondered, knowing my husband's hatred, that he had not killed me, (*it is easy to crush a flower in the bud,*)—it would have been so easy, for I could have made no resistance, and would have expressed no

Digitized by Google

reluctance. I did not know *then* how much *his interest was connected with my existence.*

"We were now in Italy. He watched me, not with the interest of affection, not with the feeling of humanity, not even with the naked instinct of compassion, but with the hungry cupidity of avarice. He seized almost the first moment of my recovered reason to inform me, that his only object in bringing me there was to compel me to exhibit my musical talents publicly, or, in plainer language, to go on the stage.

* * * *

"At times I feel it impossible to proceed—Such degradation, such misery! I have before said, a woman always feels a tale of shame like a tale of guilt.

* * * *

"The first night of my public appear-

Digitized by Google

ance seems to me like a dream—I went on the stage in a state of absolute stupefaction —the lights, the crowd, my terrors, my former sufferings, the appalling novelty of my situation, bewildered me. I moved in a kind of dazzling mist—the exertion of my powers was quite involuntary, and the enthusiastic applauses with which they were received, I returned with bursts of hysterical laughter. Habit, that never could reconcile me to my situation, reconciled me at last to its circumstances. Fioretti's avarice (the only passion he had) strongly excited by my success, prompted him to every measure that could ensure its lustre or its permanency. The study of my profession, both as a singer and actress, by occupying my time, began at length to occupy my mind. He easily discovered that my intelligence of the graces of the poetry I recited gave me an obvious advantage over his illiterate country-women. I was furnished with a library; the love of literature revived in

Digitized by Google

my heart; that heart had no other object to love. My mornings were passed in study and seclusion, and in the evenings Fioretti attended me to the theatre, and prevented, by his constant presence, the expression of that admiration which I was said to have excited. Thus, in the midst of the dissipated cities of the continent, I lived a life of almost vestal retirement. The monotonous simplicity of this mode of existence was singularly contrasted with the brilliant applauses that attended my public exertions. I have often felt when I heard them as if they were not addressed to me.

"Fioretti died; and though I could not feel unhappy, I felt desolate at his loss. It was then, that, for the first time, a hope trembled through my heart, that seemed to add a new pulse to its beatings,—a hope of communication with my father, perhaps with my child. Days after days have I passed writing on my knees, and bathed in tears letters that I hoped might touch his

Digitized by Google

heart, and tearing them because no language could supply me with words, submissive, piercing, and supplicating enough. I humbled myself even to the dust before him, and implored him to allow me to prostrate myself at his feet, if it were only to be spurned. Years passed on in these fruitless struggles; and, in the mean time, my public exertions were unremitting, for I felt I was acquiring a fortune and reputation that might one day be my child's. Oh, that child!—How have I sat hour after hour, trying to imagine its features, its growth, the tones of its voice, till my reason was almost lost from the intoxicating indulgence.

"This year I received a letter for the first time from my father; it told me that my child still lived, and that though he could not yet prevail on himself to forgive me, he would consent to see me before his death, and inform me of the name and situation of my child. He permitted me to come to

Digitized by Google

ireland, on condition of my appearing still as a public character, concealing my birth and connexions, and never intruding into his presence till summoned by himself. I came—all conditions were easy to me—my child was still alive—I lingered for a month in a breathless hope of momentary intelligence; it came *last night;* my father died suddenly, without disclosing the name—the—I cannot go on. What have I now to do in this country? What have I to do in life? Even you, Delphine, cannot feel for me; you have never been a mother."

* * * * *

It was after the receipt of the letter alluded to, that Zaira had fainted on one of her earlier nights of meeting with De Courcy.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

—— hereby doth she evitate and shun
A thousand irreligious cursed hours,
Which such a marriage would have brought on her.
SHAKESPEARE.

THE shock of De Courcy's unexpected presence had produced on the exhausted frame of Eva every effect that might have been dreaded. She did not faint, but she became ghastly, rigid, and speechless. He was terrified out of his purpose; he forgot to speak of himself or his feelings. The hope on which his heart had fed since his leaving France, fled from it in a moment, and for ever. He bore her in his arms to the house—the withered flower that he had blasted. He could not stand the inquisition of the servants' eyes, (who, having li-

Digitized by Google

ved in this regular family for years, knew him as well as they knew their master,) and he dreaded still more encountering Mr or Mrs Wentworth. He remained at the door, to send in his enquiries after Miss Wentworth. The servants answered him briefly, Miss Wentworth was dangerously ill—much worse that evening—could not be worse. With what tremendous apathy persons who speak from habit announce intelligence that kills the listener! The message ended with,—Mr and Mrs Wentworth's compliments to the gentleman, and much obliged.

De Courcy rushed from the door, grinding the words between his teeth,—"Compliments—much obliged. They have little reason—the *gentleman!*—Oh, yes, I am a stranger. They do not me, though I stand as a lacquey at their doors—I deserve it all." He went to his hotel, where the faithful Montgomery waited for him, and that night was passed in paroxysms of despair, and

Digitized by Google

and hope, and condemnation, and self-consolation. He cursed himself, then he prayed for Eva; execration and devotion trembled together on his lips. Montgomery stood by with his usual firm patience; he was at comparative ease for a moment, when De Courcy sat down to write. He wrote—tore the paper into a thousand pieces—trampled on the fragments—gnashed his teeth—stalked up and down the room—dashed himself beside the table, and wrote again.

Montgomery sat tranquilly, but his thoughts were not tranquil. He felt that he must yet witness many miserable, some dreadful scenes. The object before him, too, was irresistibly painful and interesting. He remembered De Courcy but the year before, the delight of every female eye, the admiration of all who beheld him. A sculptor could have added nothing to the perfection of his form; a painter would vainly have imitated its freshness and bloom. What a

Google

figure was he now!—he had shrunk from his natural dimensions. He was literally a *perfect* skeleton. Sculptors and painters might as well have sought models among the bony, unbreathing inmates of a vault. The meagre arms tossed over the head, and wildly deranging the luxuriant hair—the white reeking forehead frightfully displayed—the light of the eye quenched for ever—a sepulchral glare alone visible there—the lips that once disclosed "persuasion sleeping among roses," white, quivering, and churning the foam of madness.

"Good God!" said Montgomery, "is this the object that could turn a female brain, that has broke a female heart!"

* * * * *

It was near morning, when De Courcy finished his letter. He sat beside it—read it over and over again; he shivered from head to foot—his teeth chattered audibly—

Digitized by Google

a blue, contracted look began to spread itself over his altered features.

"De Courcy," said Montgomery, (and he repeated his name several times before the sound reached his ear),—"De Courcy, will you come to the fire? it is very late, and very cold."

"I am on fire already—I am burning," said De Courcy, while he trembled more and more, and the chattering of his teeth became frightfully audible, and his shaking hand could hold the pen no longer.

A long pause followed.

"Will you go to bed, De Courcy?" said the anxious Montgomery.

"Will you come to hell?" yelled De Courcy, and his grinding teeth, his shuddering figure, and Satanic glare of features, gave the horrible question an emphasis Montgomery shuddered to hear.

A few moments after, he flung himself, relaxed and insensible, on a sopha.

Montgomery, with the assistance of a ser-

Digitized by Google

vant, got him to bed; but when he was laid there, he placed his hand on his heart, and raised his eyes to Montgomery with a look of such anguish, that the latter found it impossible to quit him. His lips moved, but he did not articulate. Montgomery bent low, and caught the words "Take it away." Imagining he might be encumbered by something, he opened his shirt-collar, and put his hand to his bosom—"Do you not feel it," said De Courcy; "that burning cord that I feel?"

"There is nothing there," said Montgomery.

"I tell you there is," said De Courcy; "and unless it is loosened, I cannot live."

"Live for Eva!" said Montgomery, risking every thing to pacify him.

At that name a faint smile trembled on his lips, and with this smile still lingering on them he fell asleep. Montgomery watched him, cautiously withdrew the light, and retired. He thought, as he glided away

Digitized by Google

on tiptoe, and with reverted eye, that De Courcy's features had a calmer, but more death-like look than he had yet beheld.

The morning revived his hopes—De Courcy was up and dressed before him. Montgomery did not venture to ask where he was going.

The servant who opened the door for him in Dominick-Street looked surprised, but carried up his name. Wentworth was not at home, and Mrs Wentworth deliberated long with herself, whether she would see him—whether she could even bear his sight. At length she conceived that by seeing him once, she might deliver Eva's dying moments from a repetition of these persecuting intrusions; she felt it therefore her duty, and where duty impelled her she never hesitated long. She descended to the parlour where De Courcy was—no woman had ever less thought of making an impression by her appearance than Mrs Wentworth; the plainness of her figure,

Digitized by Google

and the simplicity of her habits, had prevented such an image from ever visiting her thoughts; yet so it was that the dignity of silent grief, the sense of unmerited injury, the consciousness of rectitude, and the purity of religion, lent such an elevation to her figure and movements, that, as she entered, the humbled De Courcy sunk on his knees before her.

Mrs Wentworth's passions had naturally been very strong; the power of religion had kept them dormant for years, but had not extinguished them, and now the thoughts of Eva's dying state, and the sight of him who had so cruelly reduced her to it, made them blaze out with a violence proportioned to their long and forcible suppression—"Her heart was not within her—the fire kindled, and she spake."—"Lie there for ever," said Mrs Wentworth, "till all mankind trample on you, as I could do this moment! It is fitting that your posture should be as ignominious as your nature is base. I

Digitized by Google

would not lend a finger to raise you. Rise, sir, however, and do not mock, with this show of humiliation, those whom you have humbled to the dust, on whose grey hairs you have laid a burthen that will bring them down with sorrow to the grave. Do not flatter yourself that this is repentance. No; it is one of the delusions of your wild feelings, a kind of intoxication, like that into which you worked yourself, when you persuaded yourself you loved that unhappy girl; and, fatally for her life and peace, persuaded her too well to love *you*. You saw youth and beauty, and you imagined you loved; now you see death, and imagine you feel repentance. Were you worthy of feeling it, you never would have incurred it. No man that could have loved Eva would have left her to die. You are the victim of a perpetual inebriation of the mind. Oh, that you were the only victim!—There is nothing steady, manlike, honest, or honourable in your whole composition. I am con-

Digitized by Google

vinced you could not be consistent in the pursuit of a worthy object for an hour together; and were *you* a being to be entrusted with the heart of a woman? I would not entrust you with the life of a dog I valued. And now you weep? oh what insulting hypocrisy! Reserve your tears, sir, for some fair hand to dry them—some foreign singer—some painted harlot—no matter to me or her. She is dying, sir—my niece is dying; your cruelty has killed her—your tears cannot save her."

"Oh, if you saw my heart!" said De Courcy, in a voice choaked by tears.

"Your heart!" echoed Mrs Wentworth; "and you talk of hearts? Oh, wretch, you have no heart! I lose myself while I talk to you—I forget all female reserve—I forget the meekness that becomes the disciples of Christ. Rise, sir, and begone. I pray to the Lord that I may never, by encountering your sight, run a second risk of for-

Digitized by Google

getting what ought to be the feelings and the language of a Christian."

"I must not see her then?" said De Courcy, in a voice of anguish unutterable.

"See her!—Oh, few are the sands you have left in her glass, and would you shake them with your own hand?"

"Will not you suffer her to see this letter?" and he dropt it from his trembling hands.

"If you intrust it to me," said Mrs Wentworth, "I warn you before-hand, I will tear it into ten thousand atoms—Farewell, sir!"—And with compressed lips, and a stern bend of her figure, Mrs Wentworth motioned him to the door.

De Courcy remained motionless; but the pleading of his look and posture had no effect on her. She crossed the room, and took hold of the bell; De Courcy caught her arm. "Will you expose me to your servants, at your feet?" said he.

Digitized by Google

"I would expose you to all the world, were it in my power," answered Mrs Wentworth. Her hand was on the cord. De Courcy held it.

"Hear me for a moment—you, you who are a Christian, should your Saviour reject your petitions, as you have rejected mine, what would you do? Can any of us offend a fellow-creature as much as all of us have offended God?"

At these words Mrs Wentworth let go her hold; her features relaxed; she held out at length her slow, conceding hand.

"You have made an appeal I dare not resist. I will take your letter, on the condition that you instantly depart."

De Courcy obeyed; her firm eye, and steady voice, left him no alternative. Mrs Wentworth sat meditating long with the letter in her hand; her promise then occurred to her; *that* was sacred as an oath with her, she decided to show the letter to Eva when she was able to bear it; "yet,"

Digitized by Google

said Mrs Wentworth, "of what use can it be *now*?" and while she said this, she wept bitterly.

Eva had never mentioned her momentary interview with De Courcy; it was only an additional blow on a heart that could no longer feel, but could still suffer. It left her without power, even if she had the wish, to speak of it. But the servants, to whose care De Courcy had been compelled to leave her, mentioned it in the house. Wentworth and his wife knew of it; in fact every one but Eva seemed to know of it. She never uttered his name, nor could it have appeared that they had met, but from a mixture of increased lassitude and agitation, dreadful to her aunt, who knew the cause, but not dreadful to the sufferer, who now viewed every thing in reference to eternity, and to whom nothing that appeared to hasten its approach could be unwelcome.

At intervals, and as she could bear it,

Digitized by Google

Mrs Wentworth read this letter. "It was in the bond," and Mrs Wentworth steadily fulfilled her obligation. The letter contained these words:—

"I should despair of seeking pardon of any woman but you, Eva, and even of you, but that you are a Christian. Your religion breathes nothing but mercy and forgiveness, it has infused its blessedness into you; it is to its spirit embodied in your frame that I address myself for pardon. Eva, your lips taught me the divine lesson, which I implore once more to hear from your lips. I have listened to it in delight and hope; I call on it now in despair; let it not fail me. The view of heaven was first revealed to me by you, it is united with your image; if you renounce me, I am forsaken by both, and for ever. Do not imagine this the wretched language of artificial despair. Mine is real. Could you see my withered figure, Eva, you would

Digitized by Google

not be incredulous. I know I am guilty—I plead no justification. But I know I am dying—and I feel I shall shortly need none. Those who tread on my grave, though they condemned me living, will not curse me when I am laid *so* low. I feel I have been a wretch, but no one has suffered more from my crimes than myself. I cannot bring myself, Eva, to utter an attempt at vindication to your pure ears; the very terms I must employ would be unintelligible to you; and if you even understood them, you would never accept them as palliatives.

"Yet deign to remember at least my sex, my youth, my strong temptations, the contrast to which my feelings were exposed; all the seductions of the world on one side; beauty yielding to me, genius intoxicating me, life flattering me. And on the other side—But I grow guilty in my very justification. I will not say an-

Digitized by Google

other word, except to aggravate my guilt. I am guilty then; this is a plea you yourself have told me would avail with the Saviour of mankind, the friend of sinners. Shall it be unavailing with one who declares herself his faithful follower? I again repeat I am guilty; so guilty, that, if I appeared so much so in your eyes as I am in my own, I never could dare to supplicate your pardon. But mine was no crime of the heart. At eighteen years of age, and I am no more, what does a man know of his heart? His errors should be ascribed to his ignorance of life, to the intoxication of passion, to any thing but a source from which the crimes of the heart rarely flow.

"If my crime has been great, my expiation has been perfect. I have renounced the enchantress for ever—I have dashed her cup of abominations from my lip—*I never tasted it*—I return as pure in soul and frame as I left you. I am a wretch to speak thus of Zaira—she was generous, mild,

Digitized by Google

beautiful. You are not a woman who could be gratified by seeing your rival trampled on. No, wherever I turn myself, I feel I alone am guilty, and all others are innocent. I try to collect my last breath, like a dying wretch, for one strong supplication for pardon. I have nothing to plead but my utmost need of it. Man could not prostrate himself more before the Almighty; let him not kneel to a fellow-creature, and be rejected

"I appeal to your creed, to that which constitutes the support of your own soul, as the only hope of mine. I implore you to admit me once more to your sight; if you are what you are described to me, that object will be a sufficient punishment to me; if you reject me, I must feel the terrible consolation that you never loved me."

Several following lines Mrs Wentworth suppressed in reading; the language of despair and imprecation that filled them,

Digitized by Google

on the supposition of his being refused admission, harrowed Mrs Wentworth; she spared Eva words that would have almost killed her with horror.

The last words were—"If my eyes are denied beholding you, I swear by ——, they shall be closed by my own hand!—Shudder not, Eva, at the expression of my despair, while you disdain to listen to the feeling itself. This is affectation which you must be above. Remember, that if I perish, it is you who hold the cup to my lips, it is you who make me taste the bitterness of death; you may yet snatch it away, and bid my *soul live*."

Mrs Wentworth would never have read this letter to her niece, had she not believed her beyond its influence; perhaps she was mistaken. Eva was dreadfully agitated, but her exhausted frame prevented any indication of it; she suffered internally, but she suffered the more.

Digitized by Google

It was some days before she collected herself enough to be able to speak on the subject, and nothing but the increasing distraction of De Courcy, who called every day, and every hour in the day, could have driven Mrs Wentworth to ask Eva for the answer to that frantic letter.

A faint gleam revisited Eva's pallid cheek and sunk eye at the mention of his name. She was silent for some time, and then said, with great difficulty, "I cannot write to him. The effort to speak of *him* seems to draw the last breath from my heart. I have struggled long (with what pain he knows not, I fear he never will know) to fix the image of my crucified Saviour there. He comes to contend with that image. Oh, with what agony of soul I have struggled to think only of Christ, and still the thought of *him* forced itself between! I could not sustain this struggle long—Why does he dare to renew it? If I could hold a pen, I would write to him—perhaps the intelli-

Digitized by Google

gence that I can hold one no longer may affect him. I wish"——

Her voice failed her, and Mrs Wentworth, imagining that she wanted something, asked her, with eager affection, "*What* she wished?"

"That he would suffer a wanderer to return to her God, and to die in peace," said Eva; "that is all. If he knew what an effect his presence had on me—if he knew that, while held to his heart, though almost insensible, I dared to wish for life again—that a guilty hope wandered through my veins—that *that* moment was enough to efface hours of suffering and of repentance—if he knew this, he would cease to add fuel to those flames that scorch without purifying. His letter has kindled a fire within me again. I wander in my prayers. A gleam of light had broke on my soul, and he has darkened it again. If it were possible that I could recover, that I could live, still it would be madness to listen to him.

Digitized by Google

But tell him, I am dying. No human power can save me. Let him forbear to distract my last moments—it is impossible for him to retard them."

She was so much agitated in uttering these words, that Mrs Wentworth never again mentioned his name to her.

When she next saw De Courcy, she determined to summon all her resolution to deliver her solemn message, and bid him depart in peace. But though thus "settled and bent up," her heart melted at the sight of his despair.

The spectacle of youth in despair is terrifying; it is like one of those frosts in spring, which cut off all the hope of the year.

Mrs Wentworth wept, but she refrained herself—repeated Eva's words, and added some of her own. "Pray," said she to the convulsed and gasping wretch,—"cry mightily to the Lord. Hasten to the foot of the cross, and lay your heart and your

Digitized by Google

sorrows before Him who perished there for the chief of sinners; He is able to purify the one, and to remove the other; He can wipe away tears from all eyes. To see her, to persecute her longer with unanswered letters, is impossible and useless. It is but a vain sacrifice to that earthly feeling to which you have already sacrificed too much. You sacrificed her life, you almost sacrificed her soul. Your image is the only object that still interposes between God and her. But you have also sacrificed yourself, and I cannot reproach you. I see your altered look, and I pity you, as much as I can pity the destroyer of my heart's only mortal blessing. I pray for you, De Courcy; so does your dying victim. You meet no more on earth, but you may meet where your union will be eternal; 'and your light affliction, which is but for a moment, will work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Seek the inheritance which she is about to partake—the inheritance of saints

Digitized by Google

in light. She leaves you for ever here; but her example abides with you. She is gone too far to listen to any mortal voice that would recall her. Her's bids you arise and follow her. She treads the path that the blessed have trod—a path of suffering and of glory, bedewed with the tears of earth, but brightened with gleams of heaven—'the redeemed shall walk there.' By that path 'the ransomed of the Lord shall return to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

The leech then said,
And he shook his head,
She never could health recover;
Yet long in pain
Did the wretch remain,
Sorrowing for her lover.

LEWIS.

WHEN Mrs Wentworth returned to Eva, she found the physician with her. He drew her to the window, with that air of solemn and fruitless precaution by which the living tantalize death, to announce to her that Eva was much worse, so much that—he paused, with a look of grave concern—"Something," he said, "had agitated her since his last visit."

Digitized by Google

When he was gone, Eva beckoned to her aunt to approach the bed, which she had never quitted since the fatal night she met De Courcy. She came—then Eva drew De Courcy's letter from beneath her pillow, and, giving it to Mrs Wentworth, implored her to remove it from her sight for ever.

"Till that is removed," said she, "I never can regain that small portion of peace for which I have laboured since he deserted me. Oh, how dreadful it is to detect deception in our hearts even on the verge of the grave! I had thought all was over. I refused to see him, and believed my victory complete; but I received his letter, and I am punished as I deserve for the self-pleasing treachery of my heart. Take it away; let all the memorials of my earthly frailty perish. God will not deign to share a divided heart with a mortal. Yet let me read it once more," she added, as her aunt

Digitized by Google

took the letter; "it is the last look I shall cast behind me."

She read it without much emotion, till she came to the passage, where he hints at the consolation he will derive from the thought that she never loved him—"Cruel," she exclaimed, laying her hand on her throbbing heart, with a look of agonizing conviction—"Cruel!—Oh, let him do any thing but reproach me with the want of that feeling, whose excess has brought me to an early grave! What could I do more than die for him? Even she for whom I was deserted, might have trembled to give the proof, that I, deserted as I was, have given without a murmur."

Sinking back on her bed as she spoke, she signified that she wished to be left alone. Mrs Wentworth understood the meaning of that look, and retired.

The next day the physician called. He felt her pulse. With the same solemn pre-

Digitized by Google

caution he took Mrs Wentworth to the window, and announced that his future visits would be unnecessary; recommended that any thing she liked should be given her, and took his last leave.

As he went out of the room, Eva's dying eyes followed his departure; then she turned to her aunt, and said tranquilly, "That man will never return—He will see me no more—Man gives me up."

Mrs Wentworth wept.

"Oh, weep not for me, my beloved friend!" said Eva. "Yes, friend let me call you; for the state which I am fast approaching dissolves all relationship.—Friend of my soul, you who taught my feet the way of peace, do you weep to see me tread it in patience and in faith? Oh, your tears are the only stumbling-blocks in my way! Remove them. I have trod over *his*, and paused not, let me not encounter those drops which true affection

Digitized by Google

wrings from your heart, and I shall dread no other obstruction. I die in youth; but with what a hand of mercy has the tie that bound me to life been torn! Sooner or later the delusion of life must have been dispersed. Is it not better that it was removed before it destroyed *more than my life?* When I was smote, God in his wrath remembered mercy. When the agents in our seduction from the ways of God become the immediate punishers of our dereliction, it is impossible to mistake the lesson. Had I lived, what must have been my fate? I would have lived only for him—I would have loved every thing he loved—I would have been intoxicated with the world. Such would have been my fate. I still shudder at the thought. How different is the result! How different are God's ways from ours! In the whole range of his dispensations of mercy, what is so merciful, as that the hand that led me

Digitized by Google

astray was the hand that pushed me back from the precipice! He was the author of the delusion, and he seems appointed by God to have dissolved it; perhaps, because none but he could. Had any one else been the cause of misfortune to me, how little should I have regarded it! He knew not the power of the feeling with which he inspired me. Had the whole world been armed against me, against the whole world I would have stood on his side alone. What could dissolve the spell?—he. 'It was thou, my companion, my guide, my own familiar friend.' Oh, none but he could have twined such a bond around my heart, and none but he could have rent it away! I am convinced, so intoxicated was my heart, nothing but his desertion could have undeceived me. I am undeceived, and let me bless the hand that has taken only my mortal life as the price of my conviction."

That evening, when Mrs Wentworth re-

Digitized by Google

turned to her, she found her still more composed; the removal of that letter seemed to have removed the last burthen from her heart. She had nothing more to give up. Earth had no part in her now. It was a lovely, glorious evening, in autumn; Eva's feeble eyes were fixed on the window; there was a rich dark blue in the horizon, that offered repose alike to the eye and mind. "All is mercy!" murmured Eva to herself. Mrs Wentworth heard her and paused. Eva gently waved her forward—"Yes, my dearest aunt, all things around me are ministers of mercy—my dying eyes close with delight amid this delicious scene. Autumn was always my favourite season. I count it a blessing from God that I die in autumn—its fading colours, its rich darkness, its shortened evenings, are congenial to my soul. Perhaps even in early youth I had a presentiment." She paused for a moment, and then wiping

Digitized by Google

away a few tears, said, "No, no, I am not thinking of him now."

Her dissolution was now obviously near; she rose no more from her bed, but her countenance became gradually more celestial; a faint but lovely tinge overspread the cheek it had long deserted; her eyes had a light beyond the brightness of mortality, they did "comfort and not burn." Her evangelical friends were much in her apartment; this is customary, and, when practicable from the state and habits of the invalid, is undoubtedly a solemn and edifying spectacle. But it had somewhat too much publicity for Eva. One night, after there had been prayers and hymn-singing in her room, and each departing, had solemnly wished her peace, she said to Mrs Wentworth, "When *I am dying*, do not let the preachers be about me; let me die in private; death is too solemn a thing for witnesses. They might, perhaps, press me

Digitized by Google

on some points, which I could not *then* answer clearly; and the failure of my intellects, the natural decline of my strength, might be mistaken for 'unsoundness in the faith.' They are fond of proposing *tests* at such a time; it is no time to answer nice questions; one must enjoy their religion then, not define it. If my testimony could be offered up, I would offer it in the presence of the assembled world; but God needs no such witness to his truth. The curtains of a death-bed should be closed—let mine be so, my dearest aunt. Shall I confess the truth to you? I think there is something *too public* in the printed accounts of the deaths of evangelical persons. I do not wish to be surrounded by preachers and persons calling on me to witness the truth, when I have no longer a breath to heave in witness of it. Oh, no, there is something too theatrical in that—and I," said Eva, wiping the drops from her stream-

Digitized by Google

ing forehead, and forcing a ghastly smile —" *I* have suffered too much by the theatre."

At these words, Wentworth, who was in the room, came forward. He could not bear that a *niece of his*, brought up in the very straitest sect of evangelical religion, should thus depart without leaving a memorable article for the obituary of an Evangelical Magazine. He had expected this, *at least*, from her. He had (unconsciously in his own mind) dramatized her whole dying scene, and made a valuable addition to the testimony of those who die in all the orthodoxy of genuine Calvinism.

" My dear Eva," said he, approaching her bed, and softening his voice to its softest tones, " I trust that I am not to discover in your last words a failure from the faith, for which the saints are desired to contend earnestly, and to resist even unto blood. I trust that your approach to the

Digitized by Google

valley of the shadow of death does not darken your view of the *five points*, those immutable foundations on which the gospel rests, namely,"—and Wentworth began reckoning on his fingers—Mrs Wentworth in vain made signs to him—he went on as far as *Perseverance*, when Eva, lifting her wasted hand, he became involuntarily silent.

"My dear uncle," said the dying Christian; "the language of man is as 'the dust of the balance' to me now. Reality, reality is dealing with me. I am on the verge of the grave, and all the wretched distinctions that have kept men at war for centuries seem to me as nothing. I know that 'salvation is of grace through faith,' and, knowing that, I am satisfied. Oh, my dear uncle, I am fast approaching that place where there is neither 'Jew or Greek, barbarian or Scythian, bond*man* or free, but Christ is all, and in all.' Speak

Digitized by Google

no more of points, which I cannot understand; but feel with me that the religion of Christ is a religion of the soul—that its various denominations (which I have heard so often discussed, and with so little profit,) are of light avail, compared with its vital predominance over our hearts and lives. I call," said she, collecting her hollow voice to utter the words strongly,—" I call two awful witnesses to my appeal—the hour of death and the day of judgment—they are witnesses against all the souls that live. Oh, my dear, dear uncle, how will you stand their testimony? You have heard much of the language of religion, but I fear you have yet to learn its power." She paused; for, dim as her eyes were hourly growing, she could see the tears running fast down Wentworth's rugged cheeks. His wife led him from the room. The mercy of God visited him even at the seventh hour, and we are rejoiced to relate that the labourer is (though called so late) in expectation of receiving

Digitized by Google

the same reward as those who bore the burthen and heat of the day. Mrs Wentworth returned, to pass the night beside the bed of death. Eva said to her at intervals that night, "Do not let the weakness of my dying frame, or even the wanderings of my intellect, (if I should wander) induce you to think that God has deserted me, that I have not an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast. The body may fail, the workings of the soul are invisible, but I feel that the everlasting arms are under me, though I may not always be able to express my feeling. Remember this, when I am no longer able to utter it; and let the thought that this was my declaration, while yet the power of speech remained, be your consolation." At another she said, "Death is a very different thing from what we read of in Evangelical Magazines. I have read of many who departed in triumph, who exclaimed continually, 'Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?' whose spirits were almost

Digitized by Google

glorified while yet in the flesh. I feel none of this—no ecstacy, no enthusiasm. Death is an awful thing! how awful none but the dying can tell—I tremble, but I hope; triumph becomes not a dying sinner, who casts herself with fearful confidence on the mercy of God. The waters of Jordan are cold to the foot of the passenger, but God will be with me there, and the waters shall be a wall on the right hand and on the left." Towards morning she slept, and Mrs Wentworth approached nearer the bed, to watch her countenance; she wished to accustom herself to the change produced by sleep so closely resembling that which must soon be produced by death. When she awoke, a female friend who had sat up along with Mrs Wentworth enquired how she found herself? She answered, "Perfectly calm." It was explained, that the question referred to her bodily feelings; her answer was given with more than usual strength of tone. "I am so little accustomed to think of my

Digitized by Google

bodily feelings, that when I hear the inquiries of a friend, I can only conceive that they mean, 'how my soul is faring?'" A few moments after, she said to Mrs Wentworth, "I die a monument of the power of religion. What could the whole world do for me as I lie this moment? could it restore my withered youth, or heal my broken heart? could it suggest a single hope to brighten the dark road I am about to travel? Oh what a difference between the powers of this world, and the powers of the world to come! Men might pity me, but never could imagine that they are objects of pity to me. My feet stand on the threshold of the house of many mansions, and worlds could not bribe me to look back for a moment; and this the religion of Christ has done for me. Oh how little consolation could I derive at a moment like this from 'gay religions, full of pomp and gold"—from a religion that promised nothing but temporal power or splendour to

Digitized by Google

its professors—from any religion but that of the heart and of grief? Amid the darkness of my earthly prospects, the cross brightens by the contrast. I lie here a helpless dying wretch; the world views me, and passes by on the other side; but he, the divine Samaritan, had pity on me, and the wounds of my spirit are healed."

In the course of the day, many friends came to see her; she was not able to speak to all, but her smile said much. Among the rest, Montgomery was admitted; he came to catch the mantle of the parting saint, and heal the despair of De Courcy by a touch of its folds. It was observed, that on his entrance she was slightly agitated; some recollections connected with his presence shook her soul in parting, but in a few moments her calmness was restored. She pressed his hand with a kind expression; she remembered how kind he had been to her. After a pause, she drew a ring from her finger, and gave it to him.

Digitized by Google

It had been the gift of De Courcy; round a beautiful figure of Constancy there was a French motto—C'est dans les cœurs des femmes, qu'ils habitent les longs souvenirs—"Take this to him," she said, "and"—she turned aside, and wept for a moment. During the remainder of the day, she spoke no more; but she expressed evident satisfaction when passages from the Bible were read to her. There are some, especially in the Old Testament, where the messengers of God, doubtless to accommodate themselves to human frailty, deign to borrow the language of earthly passion; such as, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." "My beloved is mine, and I am his." "Thou art mine, I have called thee by name." It was remarked, that she immediately signified her wish to hear passages in a different style; perhaps there was a reason at the bottom of her heart for this. Towards night, she made a sign that the "Pilgrim's Progress," which lay on her bed, should be put

Digitized by Google

into her hand. The circulation of this extraordinary work among the religious of all Europe is well known; and when the Spanish and Italian translators had expunged the name of *Giant Pope*, they had nothing to fear for its popularity. It was given to her, and, pointing out a page which she had folded down, she made a sign it should be read to her; it was that sublime passage that describes the departure of some of the allegorical personages for the celestial city; one is this, "When the day that *He* must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the river side, into which as he went he said, 'Death, where is thy sting?' and as he went *down deeper*, he said, 'Grave, where is thy victory?'—so he passed over, *and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.*" Another is this, (it contains the dying declaration of one of the pilgrims when about to cross the mystical Jordan;) "This river has been a terror to many; yea, the thoughts of it also have often frighten-

Digitized by Google

ed me. Now, methinks, I stand easy; my foot is fixed on that on which the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the covenant stood while Israel went over Jordan. The waters, indeed, are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold; yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the conduct that waits for me on the other side, lie like a glowing coal at my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey; my toilsome days are ended; I am going to see that head which was crowned with thorns, and that face that was spit on for me; I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith, but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with him in whose company I delight myself. I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of his foot on the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His voice to me has been most sweet, and his countenance I have more desired than they that

Digitized by Google

have most desired the light of the sun. * * * * * * * While he was thus in discourse, his countenance changed, his 'strong man bowed under him;' and after he had said, 'Take me, for I come unto thee,' he ceased to be seen of them. But glorious it was to see, how the open region was filled with horses and chariots, to welcome the pilgrims as they went up; and followed one another in at the beautiful gate of the city."

No one, even dying, need blush to listen to such words, mingled with those of Scripture. Eva testified her satisfaction on hearing them, and it pleased God shortly after to restore her speech, and along with it an extraordinary portion of strength. This is not uncommon even in the last extremity; she herself felt this unusual accession, it quickened all her senses, and she perceived the faint sound of infant voices, apparently in distress; she enquired what it was.

"The children," said Mrs Wentworth,

Digitized by Google

hesitatingly; "*your children*—the little orphans—they have been in the house day after day; and now they cannot repress their tears, though I tried to calm them."

"And I forgot them," said Eva, smiting her bosom with her wasted hand; "Oh, let them come in, dearest aunt, their sight will do me good. I can still see them, though my eyes are weaker and weaker. God has granted me strength for a moment. Oh, let me employ it for his glory! My soul is as the chariots of Aminadab. Let them come in; my dying voice may touch their young hearts." They came, and at her own desire they surrounded the bed where she lay. There was the rare and touching spectacle of youth in its bud and youth blasted—of flowers, still fresh and vernal, blooming in bright contrast round the fairest of the field, withered and dying.

"Come near me," said Eva; and the children wept at hearing her altered voice.

Digitized by Google

"Come near me, and weep not; my voice is feeble; but may God grant it strength to penetrate your souls. I am dying—start not, dear children, you must die too. When as healthful as you are now, when death appeared as far from me as from any of you this moment, I spoke to you of death. You did not heed it then;—behold it now, and believe it. I am dying. Oh, dear children, look at me; there is not one of you that entered life with views like mine. I had wealth; I had many distinctions that none of you can ever expect or will attain; yet I leave them all, and leave them without a murmur. What is it that supports me? The gospel of Christ, that alone. Oh, my dear children, love your God; in his love alone will you find an equivalent for all *you* can ever lose in life; for more, for all that *I* have lost. If the happiest lot in life awaited you, you must part with it;—you must die, and then your only support will be what forms the strength of my soul

Digitized by Google

now. Oh, then, my dear children, love your God, look not to any other source for happiness; remember what must be your resource in death; remember what is mine. Mary," said she to the eldest girl,—"Mary, I am but a few years older than you—but two years. You are fourteen, and I am not yet sixteen; yet I cannot survive more than a few hours, and a long life is probably before you. Mary, let the sight of this dying bed never quit your memory. You are young, but your youth may be withered as soon as mine. *I did not expect*—my voice is failing. Dear children, love your God, and him *only*; had I done so, my last voice would not have addressed you from this bed so soon. It is the will of God that my life can no longer benefit you; but oh let the spectacle of my early death stand in the place of many lessons! May you feel my resignation, but for ever be strangers to my errors and my sufferings."

Digitized by Google

The poor children wept sore, and struggled to be each the foremost to kiss the dying hand of their benefactress. This action touched her heart; she turned her eyes, bright with lambent glory, on her weeping relatives. "*I* leave you," said she; "but"—. Her uncle and aunt understood the appeal; they swallowed the tears that almost choaked them, and exclaimed, "God do so to us, and more also, if your last charge be not cherished by us like the apple of our eyes." Eva bowed her head faintly, and Mrs Wentworth led the children from the room. She returned soon, and found that two or three of her female friends were preparing to sing a hymn. They were very good women, but they certainly had expected something more from Eva. Those whose thoughts dwell much on a future state, are impelled, by a natural sentiment, to gather round a dying bed; they almost expect to receive intelligence of the world of spirits

Digitized by Google

from one who is so near their confines. This is very pardonable; they had been kind and faithful visitants in her long illness, and now they prepared to lift their voices, and hymn their departing companion to glory. If there was somewhat of a "form of godliness" in this, it must be allowed there was something of its "spirit" also. They sung a hymn which Eva herself had composed a little before her acquaintance with De Courcy. Its subject appears to be taken from a chapter in the Revelation.

I.

There is a plain above the skies,
And there a glorious city stands;
God is the builder of her walls,
Unwrought by art, unmade by hands.

II.

Salvation shines upon her gates,
In characters of pearly light;
Her walls a pile of adamant,
Her streets a sea of jasper bright.

Digitized by Google

III.

And who are they who solemn move
In robes of light her ways among,
With crowns upon each halo'ed head,
And praises on each burning tongue?

IV.

Through toil and trouble sore who passed
On earth while wandering, those are they;
But God hath cleansed the spotted robe,
And wiped th' unhallowed tear away.

V.

Of earthly joy their share was small,
Pain wrung the heart, want bow'd the head;
Sorrow and sin and shame they knew,
And oft they wept, and oft they bled.

VI.

Yet through the power of sov'reign grace,
Redeem'd from sin, renew'd to God;
They loved the truth that Jesus taught,
And triumph'd in the path he trod.

VII.

And who is He upon the mount,
Whose forehead bears the unutter'd name?
Round him his ransom'd people shout,
"'Tis He—and worthy is the Lamb."

Digitized by Google

VIII.

And who is He upon the throne,
Whose glory angel-harpings tell?
His name is Spirit, Light, and Love,
'Tis God himself, th' unsearchable.

XI.

Blessed, oh city, are thy walls,
And blessed who inhabit them;
God is thy temple and thy light,
Thy name the New Jerusalem.

At the words

"Through toil and trouble sore who passed,"

Eva pressed her hand on her withered breast—this was the last expression of her mortal feeling—she listened to the rest with a countenance exquisitely calm. At the close of the hymn they sat down round the bed and watched her, each praying from her heart. Some of these whispered ejaculations reached her ear, they seemed to please her; the clock struck two, she heard it, and said, "There are no clocks in eter-

Digitized by Google

nity; here time serves to measure pain; we shall not need it there." Soon a great change took place in her countenance; her friends observed it, and looked on each other. That night the dying sufferer, almost sainted, seemed to have a foretaste of the blessedness that awaited her. Her reason wandered, but her heart was awake, wrapt in a glorious intensity; it was only by the varying illumination of her countenance they could guess at the state of her mind; for though her lips moved, she did not speak. She imagined herself one of the * women who visited the sepulchre, her spirit seemed to slumber in the hallowed cave; then her countenance became ineffably bright, as she appeared to converse with the angels who watched the body; then an expression of anxious dejection over-shadowed it, like that perhaps of Mary,

* Vide Crabbe's Tales, "The Mother."

Digitized by Google

when she cried, "I know not where they have laid him." Then all became bright, placid, and heavenly, as her returning spirit recognized her Lord, and heard the promise, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and my God, and your God."

During this solemn period her look was not disturbed or fearful, like those who die in delirium, but glorious and lovely; "her face was as it had been the face of an angel." Her friends were silent from awe, for they could not but feel that something extraordinary was passing in her mind. She lay still for about an hour, and then said to Mrs Wentworth, "Bring the candle nearer to me." It was brought. "Nearer still," said she.

"It is close to you, my love," said her trembling aunt.

"Then my sight is gone," said Eva, "for I cannot see it any longer. God is untwining the cord of life with a slow and merciful hand. First, my feet were unable to

Digitized by Google

bear me to his house—then my voice became unable to sound his praise—now my sight is no more—those that look out of the windows are darkened—soon the silver cord shall be loosed, and the golden bowl broken." As she spoke her countenance changed.

"God bless you! Oh, God bless you!" cried her friends, gathering round her, and wringing their hands in the involuntary anguish of human affection. Eva attempted to return the blessing.

* * * * *

Near as she appeared to death, what an event was yet to occur! Mrs Wentworth was summoned from her bed by repeated messages from a stranger, who implored to see her, who declared something of the utmost importance was to be communicated. Mrs Wentworth waved the servant away, and whispered it was impossible for her to

Digitized by Google

see any one at that moment. Another message came, more imploring and more imperative than the first; the stranger intimated, that it was possible Miss Wentworth's life might yet be saved, if this communication were listened to immediately.

Mrs Wentworth's heart smote her; by gentle imperceptible degrees she withdrew the supporting arm from beneath the sinking head of Eva, and glided down stairs. There was that confusion in the house which always occurs in a house of grief, (even if the household is as regular as Wentworth's.) One light burnt dimly in the parlour, and scarcely shewed a female figure, who was wrapt in a long pelisse and veil, and who sat still, apparently regardless of Mrs Wentworth's entrance.

Mrs Wentworth paused—she heard the audible sobs of the stranger—all grief appeared trifling now, compared to her own. "Why am I summoned," said she, "at such an hour, and from such a scene?"

Digitized by Google

The stranger rose; and then her noble, graceful figure, forced itself involuntarily on Mrs Wentworth's notice. It could have been no trifle that impressed her at such a moment.

"Is the person who is called Eva Wentworth still alive?" said the stranger.

"I believe she may still live," said Mrs Wentworth, "but life is parting from her fast."

The stranger rushed past her with a sudden motion. Mrs Wentworth, alarmed, interposed, and asked by what right she broke into the chamber of death at such an hour?

"I am her mother!" cried Zaira, in a voice trembling with agony, but still retaining its commanding tone; and, flying past her, she was already on the stairs. Mrs Wentworth, stupified by grief and amazement, followed her, but, benumbed by her sufferings and fatigue, she followed but slowly. The female friends were closing

Digitized by Google

the eye-lids; at this action the stranger recoiled for a moment, then dashing herself on the bed, she screamed in a voice that froze the blood, (while grasping one of the lifeless hands that lay on the quilt,)—"Cold—dead—Oh, God! my child! my child!"

* * * *

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

Una restabat, quam toto corpore *mater*,
Tota veste tegens, unam minimumque relinque,

* * * * * * *

Dumque rogat, pro qua rogat—*occidit*.

OVID.

ZAIRA had gone the evening of that day to the wretched hovel where her mother lay. She went in a kind of delirium; there was no connexion of persons and events, nothing that could realize her feelings; she went, but knew not what she was to expect. When she entered the cabin, she was struck by the resolute, upright figure of the old woman, sitting up in her bed of rags, and still retaining shreds of that fantastical and terrific habit she was accustomed to wear.

Digitized by Google

There was about her a wild and fearful contrast of mental energy with the utmost wretchedness of physical nature. The moment the old woman saw her, she stiffened herself frightfully in her posture, beckoned to her with her bare, sallow arm; and as she observed Zaira's reluctance to approach, a light came to her sunk but burning eyes; she darted their dying fires at Zaira, as if they would blast her if she disobeyed. A dying wretch, clothed in rags, a mendicant all her life and a maniac, in her bed, commanding a female, whose intellectual powers were almost without competition or parallel, was a singular spectacle. The old woman again waved her meagre arm, and again flashed her sunk and blasting eyes. Zaira approached and knelt, trembling, on the damp earth, beside the bed of straw.

"Listen to me," said the old woman; "it is of little avail that you are my daughter; you would as soon that I had not told

Digitized by Google

you that; you come to me to hear about your own daughter."

"My daughter! then my child was a daughter?"

"She was—she was.—Don't come across me again. My head is not right any more than my heart, and if I am put out of my way, if once it begins to turn and to burn again, I will die, and then it all dies with me."

Zaira made a silent motion of attentive submission.

"There was a child, that the foreign villain you married took from you the minute it was born, and sent to your father; he did not care whether it lived or died. Your father gave it to a woman he knew nothing about, except that she went about helping the poor, and teaching them her own religion, (but it was not the true one,) on the condition that he never saw or heard more of it or you."

Digitized by Google

"My father!" said Zaira, breaking the injunction involuntarily. "Oh, my poor cruel father!—and was he so pitiless to my infant?—But he is dead."

"He is!" said the hag, her vindictive feelings giving a terrible strength to her faculties, and making her forgive interruption and every thing. "Yes, *that he is*, dead, and gone to his long, terrible account. I remember *that*—I can stop for *that*—I could talk and hear of *that* day and night for evermore. He brought all his bastards into the house, after you left him to marry that foreign rogue, (he was of the true church, however, more's the pity.) Well, where was I—oh!—they lived together like the devils in hell—they drank, and cursed, and fought by the hour—and one night they quarrelled in their drink, and one of the boys, his favourite, struck him, and the devil was strong in him; he knocked his old father down, and dragged him by his grey hair to the head of the stairs; and

Digitized by Google

when he was a-dragging of him, (your father,) along by the hair, the old man cried out, and he said, * 'Oh, drag me no further than the stairs, for there *I dragged my own father*, but no further.' The cry of the father sobered the boy; he saw what he had done, and his father lying at the feet of him, and he ran back to the room, where there was a loaded piece, or something, I don't † *mind* now what it was, and he shot himself through the head, cursing the hand that had struck his father. He was the father's *darlint* (after you)—he heard the shot—and he never spoke a word more, but to say, 'that shot went through my heart, though he struck me.' He never spoke more than that till he died. That was his end—ay, that was his end—and so I said it would be when he drove me from his

* Fact—in an Irish family.

† Mind, *i. e.* recollect.

Digitized by Google

house—and so I said when I was driven from that place, a beggar, and a vagabond, and a madwoman. I said it would be his end—*and it was*," said the dying wretch; her hagard features brightening with the long-reflected flames of her vengeance, "*It was—that was his end.*"

Zaira, in the silent agony of her horror, paused long; she dared not to enquire after her child. The beldame went on; she seemed to have received a powerful stimulant from relating the horrible death of her betrayer.

"There he lies," said she, glancing her hollow eyes to the side of her bed, as if she saw the soul there weltering in flames; "and there let him lie.—I was telling you of your child—well—your father gave her up to that woman, but when he found she was breeding her up well, (in her own way, that was not the true way)—the pride of a gentleman came to his heart, and he settled

Digitized by Google

a load of money on her, if the woman would keep her, and he *get shut of her, quite entirely*, and for ever. Then the woman, (I forget her name,) she married a *black presbyterian*, some of what they call the *new light*; but they have no light at all but the light of hell-fire, which that it may be on them for ever and ever, Amen.—And then the madness was on me for years and years, and I thought to *make her soul*, however it went with mine. I had money, for I starved and begged, and starved and begged till I got more than those that gave it could tell; and my thought was to get her carried off to Spain, or some place, where she might live and die in the true faith,—Well, the money was ready, and the boys were ready that carried her off, and the ship was ready to take her away, and no more to be said or known of her—and least of all of the old madwoman. I don't know, a slip of a boy got her away from me; I

Digitized by Google

don't mind how it was now, my head was never right before, and it was never better since, but only worse betimes; yet if I am a living woman, (which I *will* not be long), I saw that same boy beside you at Bray, and at the fire, the great fire where all the bells were ringing, and the bells in my head outringing them all."

"Good God! you knew me then," said Zaira; "and why, oh why, mother, did you not tell me that my child was still alive?"

"I knew you, and I did not know you," said her mother; "sometimes I thought, but when I *thought*, I grew madder than ever. What could I know of my own child, with her foreign name, and beautiful look? Now that you look miserable, I know you better. Yet one night, the night of the fire—that fire seemed to give me some light. I knew you for a minute—I was on my knees to you, and the tall lad

Digitized by Google

beside you. If you did not know your own mother *from the heart*, can you blame the mother for not knowing her child?"

The word "child" thrilled on the chords of Zaira's heart; some detached parts of the story, too, sickened her with unimaginable apprehensions; "But my child—my daughter—mother—speak to me—I can no longer speak," cried Zaira.

"Nor I either," said the old woman, drawing up her feet into the bed with the horrible rigidity of death.

"Her name—her name!" shrieked Zaira, bending over her.

"Her name!" said the old woman; "oh they gave her no true name. They should have called her Mary, after the Virgin, or Teresa, or some holy name, after the blessed saints; but they called her after some black, bitter Presbyterian. Her name is blotted from the book of life. They called her Eva Wentworth—some such thing—

Digitized by Google

no matter now. Bid them put some covering on my feet—I am deadly cold."

* * * * *

Eva Wentworth—Madness was Zaira's refuge for some moments; she spun and twirled in agony on the narrow floor, and fell on it shrieking, "I have murdered her, I have murdered my own child—my own child!"

It was too true; Eva was the child of Fioretti and Zaira, adopted at first from charity by Mrs Wentworth, and afterwards brought up as her niece. Zaira's altered name, and long residence on the continent, could not awaken any recollection of the wife of Fioretti in the mind of Mrs Wentworth, and her unfaded beauty never could suggest to the beholder that she was the mother of a child fifteen years of age. The only ray of light or hope that flashed on

Digitized by Google

the darkness of her soul was a wild belief that, by disclosing herself to her daughter, by prostrating herself before her, she might perhaps protract her life, might perhaps save it. Late as the hour was, she desired to be conveyed instantly to Wentworth's house, and came—too late.

* * * *

The interval between Eva's death and interment was passed by De Courcy in sullen and calm despair. He never spoke but to enquire when her funeral was to take place; and on the morning of it attired himself in mourning to attend it. Montgomery felt it would be useless to oppose him. They went together. When the coffin was brought into the aisle, and placed before the reading-desk, where the clergyman was about to read the awful chapter from the Epistle to the Corinthians, there

Digitized by Google

was a short pause—it was then very touching to remark the difference between the mute and solemn grief of her relatives and friends in the surrounding pews, and the wailing of the poor who filled the aisle, and wept aloud for their benefactress. But all feebler feelings were lost in the spectacle of Zaira and De Courcy, seated on each side of the coffin in silence. Zaira's face was covered by her veil, but De Courcy kept his eyes immoveably fixed on the plate, where he read for the last time the name of Eva Wentworth.

The lesson was concluded; the attendants came forward to bear the coffin to the church-yard; then Zaira and De Courcy rising, stood opposite to and recognised each other. They did not speak, nor, from the expression of their features, could it have been discovered that they had ever met before. In going out of the church, they again were close to each other for a

Digitized by Google

moment, but neither of them experienced the slightest sensation from the presence of the other. Singular meeting of two persons, who, a few months before, had felt that the existence of each depended on the other! Thus, perhaps, spirits meet in a future state, in a cold, averted, shuddering state of recognition, when they see no longer with the eyes of the flesh. When the earth was heaped over the grave, and the black coaches slowly retired with the friends and relatives, De Courcy lingered behind the rest; and when all were gone, he threw himself on the grave, and remained there for several hours. Montgomery stood beside him; neither of them uttered a word; when, at last, he suffered himself to be torn away, no entreaties could prevail on him to speak; he never changed his posture, tasted food, or closed his eyes in sleep. It was obvious that this could not continue long.

Digitized by Google

On the evening of the second day, he said, in a voice hollow and painful, from long-suspended articulation, and approaching death, "You saw her in her last moments—was there no word of peace for me?"

"She sent you this ring," said Montgomery; "and"——

"Well!"

"She was then unable to speak," said Montgomery; "but her countenance expressed all you could wish."

De Courcy took the ring, and pressed it to his pale lips. Encouraged by the permission to speak to him, Montgomery pressed him to recline on the sopha, and try to get some rest. De Courcy lay down—slept—and awoke no more. As Montgomery beheld the calmness of his exquisite features, he "trusted his soul had gotten grace." He was interred near Eva, for Montgomery knew the wish of his heart,

Digitized by Google

though death had prevented his uttering it. On his grave-stone was this simple line:—

CHARLES DE COURCY,
Obiit Mense Novembris, anno Domini, 1814,
Ætatis suæ 19.

Perhaps the *date* of such inscriptions is as profound a lesson as was ever taught—the tomb-stones of the young are *full* of instruction.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

THE following spring, the Miss Longwoods, gay and happy, were escorted by youthful, titled bridegrooms into that very church. They entered it fluttering in bridal finery, and as they quitted it, their steps trod lightly on the graves of De Courcy and Eva.—Such is the condition of life.

* * * * *

Zaira still lives, and lives in Ireland. A spell seems to bind her to the death-place of her daughter and lover. Her talents are gone, at least they are no longer exerted; the *oracles* may still be there, but it is only the tempest of grief that now scatters their

Digitized by Google

leaves. Like Carathis in the vaults of Eblis, her hand is constantly pressed on her heart, in token of the fire that is burning there for ever; and those who are near her, constantly hear her repeat, "My child—I have murdered my child!"

When great talents are combined with calamity, their union forms the *tenth wave* of human suffering—grief becomes inexhaustible from the unhappy fertility of genius, and the serpents that devour us, are generated out of our own vitals.

FINIS.

EDINBURGH:
Printed by James Ballantyne and Co.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MAR 1 7 1932

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google